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PhD Submission

PhD THESIS TITLE: Thatcher's Culture of Conformity: The Disintegration of Party/State Distinctions and the Weaponisation of the State in Response to the Miners' Strike 1984/85.

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Abstract

This research highlights the existence and examines the culture and practices of three secretive groups within the Thatcherite state which operated between 1984 and 1989. Primarily involved with the state's responses to the miners' strike, the groups were also involved in government initiatives concerning four other areas of the public sector. The new data is used to answer significant questions surrounding the Thatcherite state during the period. The research investigates existing ideological mores within the state and gauges the development of new cultural norms peculiar to the Thatcher era. New evidence, only recently made available to the public, is used to examine Thatcher's personal relationship with members of the permanent state and measure the Prime Minister's level of involvement in directing policy. The research uses the new data to add to existing debates in two key areas. Firstly, Stuart Hall's theory of authoritarian populism is tested by examining the activities of the three secretive agencies in relation to Thatcherism's ideological discrepancy concerning that ideology's authoritarian and anti-statist strands. Secondly, the research attempts to unite two competing historiographical arguments. On the one hand, that the British state has always been authoritarian and conservative. On the other, that Thatcher and Thatcherism offered something different and more extreme than anything that went before.

Acronyms

- ACPO –Association of Chief Police Officers
- CIU – Central Intelligence Unit. Official name of the Leicester Unit.
- CND – Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
- COHSE – Confederation of Health Service Employees
- COU – Cabinet Office Unit
- CPAP – Crime Patterns Analysis Program
- CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain
- CPS – Centre for Policy Studies
- CPSA – Civil and Public Services Association
- DSPU – Downing Street Policy Unit
- ERG – Economic Reconstruction Group
- ILEA – Inner London Education Authority
- MI5 – Security Service
- MI6 – Secret Intelligence Service
- MISC101 – Ministerial Group on Coal
- MT – Militant Tendency
- NACODS - National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers
- NCB – National Coal Board
- NHS – National Health Service
- NUM - National Union of Mineworkers
- NUPE – National Union of Public Employees
- NUT – National Union of Teachers
- NWMC – National Working Miners' Committee
- PSU – Police Support Unit
- OTJC – Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign
- SHC – Subversion Home Committee
- SPL – Subversion in Public Life
- UDM – Union of Democratic Mineworkers

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

In 1985 shortly after the end of the miners' strike, the historian John Saville highlighted the existence of the 'Ridley Report.'[1] Written by a Tory think-tank in 1977, the Report recommended that once the Conservative Party was back in power, Britain's nationalised industries and the trade unions which protected them should be attacked, and the unions 'destroy[ed].'[2] Once that was done, the industries could be fully privatised.[3] The report highlighted the National Union of Mineworkers as a future target and proposed that the miners' union should be goaded into a strike.[4] The report argued that the targeted sectors should be attacked 'by stealth,' therefore avoiding a full-on confrontation and allowing the government to feign political neutrality in any coming industrial dispute.[5] In his 1985 article, Saville argued that the Thatcher government went about implementing the Ridley Report from 1983 onwards. Saville could not test his claim against any primary documentation produced by state agencies involved in the running of the strike – that data was secret and withheld from public view. However, that situation changed between 2014 and 2018 as a plethora of departmental files were made public at the National Archives. For the first time, this research was able to gauge state responses to the miners' strike using that new evidence. The focus of the thesis is not on the strike itself, but rather the Thatcherite state. Clive Bloom and Seamus Milne both wrote seminal works concerning the Thatcherite state during the strike. Both argued that the Thatcherite state was *different to what went before*. According to those authors, certain elements of the British state behaved differently, due to the authoritarian manner of both Thatcher personally and ideological Thatcherism.[6] However, Ralph Miliband argued that the British state, like any state in a western democracy, was necessarily conservative, biased toward conservative parties and hostile toward organised labour, and that this had *always been the case*.[7] One of the things that the research investigates is that discrepancy between those two positions. A second discrepancy exists in an ideological context - concerning Stuart Hall's description of Thatcherism as 'authoritarian populism.'[8] Hall contrasted the Thatcherites' public pronouncements of neoliberalism and anti-

[1] John Saville. 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.
[2] Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group 1978 (the Ridley Report), *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795, p15. (Accessed 24th April 2018).
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid, Confidential Annex p24.
[5] Ibid, p15.
[6] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), and Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015).
[7] Ralph Miliband. *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (Aylesbury: Quartet Books 1974), p76.
[8] Stuart Hall. *Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left: The Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso 1990).

statism with those apparent strands of authoritarianism within the state during Thatcher's tenure.[9] This research interprets the new evidence in order to add to that debate.

Much of the new evidence takes the form of three case studies, each one revealing the existence and activities of a secretive part of the state during the Thatcher tenure. The first case study focuses on the Downing Street Policy Unit (DSPU). The DSPU was an elite body of policymakers based inside 10 Downing Street which provided policy advice directly to the Prime Minister. Case Study 1 shows how Thatcher populated the DSPU with private-sector loyalists from companies which had longstanding ties with the Conservatives including NM Rothschild and the oil giants, Shell and BP. Each company seconded an executive into the DSPU for the duration of the strike. Following the Ridley Report for guidance, those DSPU loyalists were instrumental in every aspect of the dispute including the accumulation of coal stocks as early as 1983, policing, the law courts, the financial battle and the media. Why did Thatcher recruit private-sector executives directly into the state apparatus, and what specific activities did they undertake during the miners' strike in the specified fields? The DSPU members and their activities are investigated fully through a deep analysis of the new data in order to make an original contribution to ongoing debates about the nature of both the Thatcher government and Thatcherism.

Case Study 2 reveals the existence of a highly secretive multi-agency collaboration of civil servants, MI5 officers and senior policemen during the miners' strike. Known as the Leicester Unit, the new evidence will be examined to provide details of what the groups' remit was, what effect Thatcher and the DSPU had on permanent state employees such as them, and what that says about both the Thatcher government and Thatcherism. After the miners' strike had been defeated by dire need, the new evidence reveals the existence of a third secret group – explored in Case Study 3. Subversion in Public Life (SPL) was another multi-agency collaboration, featuring many of the same people and agencies involved in the Leicester Unit including senior civil servants, MI5 officers and senior policemen. However, the SPL existed between 1985 and 1990, after the strike had ended, and was preoccupied with several other areas including the rank-and-file civil service, the education sector, Labour-stronghold local councils and NHS trade unions. The evidence relating to both the Leicester Unit and the SPL will be analysed in order to provide fresh insight into the secret workings of the Thatcher state. The identification of processes and influences instrumental to those involved will be considered, as well as key contextual developments. Together, the DSPU, the Leicester Unit and the SPL offer three new areas of the Thatcherite state which have never undergone any scrutiny. Indeed, the very existence of the latter two was not known before this research. These secretive

[9] Ibid.

groups, the people involved in them and the activities undertaken by those people will all be searched in an effort to unify the historiographical discrepancy and add further to Hall's theory concerning authoritarian populism.

This research utilises recently-released archival evidence – much of it never before seen by the public - to make a new contribution in several fiercely-contested fields of historiographical debate. The research offers original perspectives amid the often polemical and conflicting narratives which surround the government's responses to the miners' strike. Moreover, the evidence adds to the debate concerning the apparent authoritarian and interventionist nature of Thatcherism as set against that ideology's anti-statist credentials. The research also comes at a critical time period. At the time of writing, the 2019 General Election contest has ended with an unconventional right-wing figure, aligned to Margaret Thatcher, assuming the role of Prime Minister. At the same time, the home civil service in Whitehall has faced accusations that it leaked stories to the press about the apparent 'frailness' of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, in an allegedly deliberate bid to jeopardise Labour's chances of winning.[10] Other state and ex-state employees have recently attacked the Leader of the Opposition. In June 2017, on the day before the last General Election, the ex-head of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), Richard Dearlove, wrote in *the Telegraph* that it would be 'dangerous for the nation' if Labour won and Corbyn became Prime Minister.[11] In a democracy, the apparatus of the state might ideally be expected to aspire to political neutrality or, at the very least, to publicly and superficially proclaim non-partisanship - the Civil Service Code professes absolute adherence to integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality.[12] If, however, distinctions between the governing party and the permanent state disintegrate and those working within the state use its resources for party political purposes, then democracy cannot truly be said to exist. If the Thatcher-era led to the weaponisation of sections of the state against political opponents of the sitting Prime Minister then knowledge of that development might prove crucial in the very near future. This research is a piece of contemporary history which has a connection with, and is informed by, the concerns of the present. Secret state activity, such as that which is discussed here, has a long-reaching legacy that cannot, and should not, be ignored.

Introduction to the Primary Sources

[10] Peter Walker, 'Labour calls for inquiry into civil service claim that Corbyn is too frail,' *the Guardian*, 30th June 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/jun/30/labour-calls-for-inquiry-into-civil-service-claim-that-corbyn-is-too-frail (Accessed 30th June 2019).
[11] Richard Dearlove, 'Jeremy Corbyn is a danger to this nation. At MI6, which I once led, he wouldn't clear the security vetting,' *the Telegraph* 7th June 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/07/jeremy-corbyn-danger-nation-mi6-led-wouldnt-clear-security-vetting/ (Accessed 30th July 2019).
[12] The Civil Service Code. *Gov.UK*. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-code/the-civil-service-code (Accessed 7th July 2019).

This research is evidenced on a raft of newly-released archival material at The National Archives (TNA) originally produced during the years 1972-1989. However, some of the files, including those from the earlier part of that period, were only made public as late as July 2018. The Public Records Act of 1958 originally stated that departmental records such as those used here should only be made open to the general public after a period of fifty years.[13] However, a further act in 1967 reduced that time period to thirty years, while the government announced in 2013 that it aimed to reduce the period yet further – to twenty years.[14] Despite all of that, files are often held back by a department – often with little or no explanation. The introduction of the Freedom of Information Act in 2005 allowed for a member of the public to request access to withheld files. However, requests are not guaranteed to be successful and can be turned down by the same department which held back the file release. Public pressure highlighting a lack of transparency might, however, force a department to be more prompt in its releases.

Representing the miners and their families, the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) have long campaigned for an official, state-sanctioned investigation into the 'Battle of Orgreave,' similar to the Hillsborough Disaster Inquiry. South Yorkshire Police (SYP) interim Chief Constable, Dave Jones, announced in May 2016 that the force would welcome such an inquiry.[15] However, the reason that SYP had been forced to bring Jones in as an interim was that the standing Chief Constable, David Crompton, was suspended in the wake of the Hillsborough verdicts. Crompton had made crass and insensitive remarks that attempted to defend SYP practices during and after the disaster, in defiance of the inquest verdicts and to the anger of the Hillsborough families.[16] SYP's commitment to transparency might also be questioned in response to a Freedom of Information Request put forward by the author of this research in August 2015. That request was in relation to several boxes of evidence held by the force in regard to Orgreave. Compliance Officer Neil Sheedy declined the request, which he thought could be 'vexatious.'[17] In October 2016 the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, announced to Parliament that there would not be any government inquiry because there had been 'no deaths or wrongful convictions' at Orgreave, provoking a raft of polarised

[13] Public Records Act 1958, *legislation.gov.uk*, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/6-7/51/section/3/enacted (Accessed 29th July 2019).
[14] Public Records Act 1967, *legislation.gov.uk*, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/44/section/1/enacted AND '20-Year Rule,' *The National Archives Website*, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role/transparency/20-year-rule/ (Accessed Both 29th July 2019).
[15] Untitled, 'South Yorkshire Police chief 'would welcome Orgreave review,'' *BBC News Online*, 5th May 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-36212531
[16] John Reed, 'This erosion of public trust: South Yorkshire police chief suspended over Hillsborough verdicts,' *The Yorkshire Post*, 27th April 2016, http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/this-erosion-of-public-trust-south-yorkshire-police-chief-suspended-over-hillsborough-verdicts-1-7879541 (Accessed 22nd November 2016).
[17] Email from Information Compliance Clerk SYP Neil Sheedy to the Author, 18th August 2015.

opinion across the media.[18] The Labour MP Andy Burnham accused Rudd of being complicit in 'an establishment stitch-up,' while the right-wing historian, Dominic Sandbrook, argued in *the Daily Mail* that it was the flying pickets who were responsible for most of the violence at Orgreave.[19] In what was arguably an attempt to diffuse pressure, Rudd sanctioned the release of 30 boxes of Home Office files relating to the strike which were subsequently made public between June and November 2017. Some of the material used to evidence this research, particularly in case study 2, comes from that material. Without the determination of the OTJC, that evidence might still be hidden from public view.

Historians who use the type of politically-sensitive material used here might be familiar with the restrictions and challenges that routinely come up when using the archive to question official state narratives. The new evidence reveals the inner workings of closed and covert institutions and discloses aspects of the policy-making cycle which would usually remain hidden from public view. Even within the new evidence used here, several items were redacted from the files and will not be released for 80 years. A department may also hold back records under Section 3.4 – a restriction which refers back to the original Public Records Act of 1958. Section 3.4 states that records may be retained if they are needed for 'administrative purposes' or for 'any other special reason,' a rather vague statement open to interpretation.[20] Freedom of Information Requests are turned down – the Home Office has informed the author via email that 'what interests the public is not the same as the public interest,' and, as discussed, one request was deemed 'vexatious' by South Yorkshire Police.[21] These are some of the challenges which occur when using state-produced primary sources that risk reconfiguring official memory. Undoubtedly, there are some good reasons for redactions and refusals to release evidence. On the other hand, those redactions and refusals, if excessively deployed, might be seen as an attempt by the state to construct 'tailor-made versions of the past' that suit present government preferences.[22] The difficulties encountered in obtaining the sensitive

[18] See Amber Rudd's announcement to Parliament here: Alan Travis, 'Government rules out Orgreave inquiry,' *the Guardian* 31st October 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/31/government-rules-out-orgreave-inquiry For differing polemics on the possibility of an Orgreave inquiry, see Jason Beattie, 'There is no justice: Refusal to grant Orgreave inquiry a spit in the face for every former coalfield community', *Daily Mirror* 1st November 2016, https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/no-justice-refusal-grant-orgreave-9167295 (Accessed 6th June 2018) AND Dominic Sandbrook, 'Murder, rape threats, nail-studded cudgels and a mad Marxist set on destroying democracy - what inquiry into the Battle of Orgreave SHOULD probe,' *Daily Mail* 15th September 2016, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3791972/What-inquiry-Battle-Orgreave-probe.html (Accessed 20th December 2017).

[19] Ibid.

[20] The Public Records Act 1958, *Legislation.gov.uk* http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/6-7/51 (Accessed 29th July 2019).

[21] Email from the Home Office's Police Integrity Unit to the Author, 26th April 2017.

[22] Valerie Johnson & Caroline Williams, 'Using Archives to Inform Contemporary Policy Debates: History into Policy?,' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32.2 (2011), pp.287-303.

material used to evidence this research were time-consuming and obstacle-ridden for an evidence-based researcher with a limited time period. In some cases, additional pressure did not persuade the state to release a particular file. The usual limitations to archival material must also be acknowledged. All of the archival material was created by fallible human beings who may have made mistakes, asserted false claims and had their own ideological agenda (the latter is indeed a central theme of the research). Perceptions of reality detailed by the creators of the material likely differed from other people's versions of the same events. Despite those restrictions, the power of the archive is in now, thirty years later, having the potential to expose a part of the British state which had until the present remained hidden from public view. The difficulties described must be juxtaposed with the inherent advantages of obtaining brand new material previously unseen and unused by anyone else.

Social histories of the miners' strike have often used oral history and written testimony from the miners themselves, as well as from those within the miners' support groups, to better understand the events of the dispute and the effects felt by those involved.[23] However, the actions of the government and state during the strike remain a source of deep division. Allegations of state brutality and underhand tactics have been put forward by authors such as Seamus Milne and Clive Bloom.[24] Those texts are necessarily journalistic - due to a lack of existing archival evidence at the time of publication. Although both of those texts are key secondary works in this research, Bloom (who argues that the Thatcher state engaged in a raft of counter-subversion and secret political plots against opponents) offers the disclaimer that 'you either believe it or you don't.' That lack of evidence has led to a significant and identifiable gap in knowledge concerning the government's responses to the strike. An initial reading of one set of primary sources, the Prime Minister's Office papers, at TNA in 2016 revealed the noticeable involvement of the Downing Street Policy Unit in the government's responses to the strike. After the Home Office files were released in 2017, details of another group, the secretive Leicester Unit, emerged. In both cases, much of the data consisted of minutes of meetings and letters, the latter including correspondence to and from the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and others ministers. A deep, interpretive reading of both sets of sources allowed for the composition of a narrative exposition which explained the findings in light of the knowledge gap and the existing literature. In July 2018, another set of papers were released, entitled 'the Threat of Subversion.' Although those were produced shortly after the strike, they

[23] For instance: Penny Green. *The Enemy Without: Policing and Class Consciousness in the Miners' Strike* (Milton Keynes: OpenUP 1990).
[24] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), and Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015).

revealed the existence of another group, Subversion in Public Life (SPL), which appeared to have a similar remit to the other groups highlighted in this research and analysed up until that point. Several of the same people from within the state agencies involved in the Leicester Unit were involved again. That release of new documentation offered another insight into the relationship between Thatcher and some of those within the permanent state and allowed for the widening of the evidence base and the strengthening of the narrative composition as it existed at that time. Although the archive remains an enduring symbol of state authority, the release of the new evidence, often under pressure from agencies like the OTJC, means that a significant contribution can now be made toward closing the knowledge gap by replacing allegation with evidence-based analysis. The raw material of the archive is the central pillar on which this research is based - it has provided both immediacy and authenticity to the thesis.

Research Questions and Methodological Approach

The archival data which makes up the primary sources will undergo a process of documentary analysis in order to find answers to the research questions below. However, that analysis is not based on mere detection of bias. As discussed above, the primary documentation to be studied in this research is held by the National Archives at Kew. Although the National Archives is a public institution, it is financed by the state. The government of the day owns and controls the archive. Rules of privacy and secrecy continue to protect both private individuals and public bodies from embarrassment.[25] The British state is not necessarily to be trusted in these areas – as the Hillsborough Inquests revealed. As such, it is widely recognised that the state archive is likely to be biased, and detection of those biases would not constitute a major discovery.[26] Rather than bias detection, the method focuses on identifying the particular processes and influences by which the record was produced, the contextual developments surrounding the production of the document, and the existing historiographical framework surrounding the subject matter on which the new evidence gives insight.

1. **To what extent were the ideological mores of Thatcherism adopted by those working within the permanent state such as senior civil servants, MI5 officers and senior police?**
2. **What cultural norms were established within the state in response to Thatcher and Thatcherism?**

[25] Peter Claus & John Marriott. *History: An Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice* (Oxon: Routledge 2017), p434.
[26] Ibid.

3. **Margaret Thatcher has been described by Simon Jenkins as an aggressive and angry leader. In what way did Thatcher's leadership and personality influence members of the permanent state during her tenure?**
4. **Thatcher recruited private-sector loyalists directly into the state apparatus. What impact did they have on members of the permanent state?**
5. **Clive Bloom and Seamus Milne have argued that the advent of Thatcher led to the politicisation of sections of the state. How far was this a new manifestation, given existing claims (by Miliband) that the permanent state had always been politically biased in favour of conservatism?**
6. **Although neoliberal theory champions the rolling-back of the state, Thatcherism has been described by Stuart Hall as 'Authoritarian Populism.' To what extent is Hall's theory proven or disproven by the new evidence?**

Questions 1 & 2: Identification of processes and influences on those described within the new evidence: The new evidence will be analysed in order to identify the constructed narratives and conceptual apparatus which state employees adhered to when making their decisions and undertaking their activity.[27] Question 1 looks for the ideological mores of Thatcherism specifically, and gauges how far the Tory Party's new ideological direction permeated the permanent British state. Question 2 looks for evidence of the cultural norms in which the members of the three secret groups operated. To sum up, were the members of the three groups proactive Thatcherites?

Questions 3 & 4: Contextual developments: To what extent where those within the state reacting to contextual developments? In order to answer question 3, the new evidence will be searched for evidence of Thatcher's personal relationship with those operating within the three groups, to find out the scale of the Prime Minister's own impact on the permanent state. An initial reading of the Prime Minister's Papers (PREM) revealed the recruitment of private-sector loyalists directly into Number 10. What influence did they have on the public sector employees already present? Were the members of the three groups reactive to new and important influences?

Questions 5 & 6: the new evidence in contemporary historiographical debates: Questions 5 and 6 will examine the new data in regard to two unresolved conflicts within existing historiography. The first of these conflicts, examined in Question 5, is a chronological discrepancy. Authors such as

[27] Valerie Johnson & Caroline Williams, 'Using Archives to Inform Contemporary Policy Debates: History into Policy?,' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 32.2 (2011), pp.287-303.

Bloom and Milne have argued that Thatcher ushered in a politicisation of the state.[28] However, Miliband argued that the state has always been conservative.[29] Can the new evidence provide a bridge between these two positions by revealing the inner workings of a secretive part of the Thatcherite state? The second discrepancy, addressed in Question 6, concerns the authoritarian nature of Thatcherism as described by Hall.[30] Despite Hall's analysis, Thatcherites were publicly strident cheerleaders for the rolling back of the state. How will the new evidence fit into this unresolved issue?

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

One of the central concepts of this research is the 'culture of conformity' which, it is argued, was established across several agencies of the state apparatus. Thatcher's brash and uncompromising personality (discussed below) can be seen as an important causal element of the culture of conformity. However, other causes must be considered. Some contemporaries have argued that the sycophantic deference sometimes shown to Thatcher by those surrounding her was not the Prime Minister's fault, but a symptom of their own weakness - for being too afraid to offer disagreement. Already-established culture norms within state institutions also contributed. Moreover, Britain's constitutional framework had long been identified as being particularly at risk from a 'zealot-like Premier.'[31] Another consideration is whether those operating within the culture of conformity acted with 'political legitimacy.' It might be argued that the activities of those within the state apparatus were always legitimate if carried-out with the sanction of the democratically-elected, sitting Prime Minister. On the other hand, the secretive nature of the groups discussed might be seen as a manifestation of state activities without 'moral justification' and therefore denoting a lack of legitimacy. This research is necessarily dense, covering as it does a seventeen-year time period and touching on several different areas of historiographical debate including 'Thatcherism' and 'the miners' strike.' To understand Thatcherism, several authors have examined the electoral and economic elements, broken the ideological side down into constituent themes, and pointed out Thatcher's own apparent belief that her cause was, above all, moral.[32] Existing literature surrounding

[28] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), and Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015).
[29] Ralph Miliband. *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (Aylesbury: Quartet Books 1974), p76.
[30] Stuart Hall. *Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left: The Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso 1990).
[31] Walter Bagehot. *The English Constitution* (London: Chapman and Hall 1949), p206.
[32] See for example Stuart Hall. *Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left: The Hard Road to Renewal* (London: Verso 1990). AND Bob Jessop, Kevin Bonnett, Simon Bromley & Tom Ling. 'Thatcherism and the Politics of Hegemony: A Reply to Stuart Hall,' *New Left Review* 153 (September 1985), pp.87-101.

the strike reveals a further conceptual framework revolving around 'polarisation' - in a geographical, political and socio-economic sense.

The Culture of Conformity

Writing shortly after the strike, the historian Raphael Samuel attempted to explain why Thatcher might have felt that it was the duty of some elements of the security apparatus to act in a manner which might be deemed as politically partisan, at least to some observers.[33] For committed Thatcherites (which included the Prime Minister herself), argued Samuel, a strike represented societal chaos.[34] Insubordination from political opponents emanating from the working-classes, threats to law and order and threats to private property made the NUM and the flying pickets subversives which in turn made them criminals and even enemies of the state. Thatcher's own 'enemy within speech' was another example of the Prime Minister's view of the miners' leaders, and Scargill in particular, not just as personal and political opponents, but as opponents of the British state which she represented and therefore, the British nation. For those working within the state, Thatcher was a leader who was angry, intolerant of dissent and not averse to replacing anyone who did offer alternative opinions. Her belligerent personality was well-documented by Jenkins, who knew her personally.[35] According to Jenkins, the Prime Minister was socially gauche, lacked a warm and sympathetic side, and often displayed insensitivity to the plight of the poor.[36] Thatcher appeared to hold pre-formed views on any evidence put before her and would become instantly aggressive and dismissive if anyone present demurred. If she felt that she was losing a point, she quickly switched to another.[37] Those qualities made for a strong leader and meant that she never seemed like she was less than in command to those around her.[38] Her non-toleration of dissent meant that she liked to surround herself with those from whom she could expect agreement and adoration.[39] Unlike previous Prime Ministers, Thatcher preferred to hand-pick her own civil servants in Whitehall.[40]

However, Michael Heseltine argued that some Whitehall officials and Tory MPs alike were responsible for allowing Thatcher to ride roughshod over them – even if they knew she was wrong. Heseltine felt that Thatcher's gender was a major cause of that sycophancy. Most of those within

[33] Raphael Samuel. 'Introduction,' in Raphael Samuel, Barbara Bloomfield & Guy Boanas (eds.) *The Enemy Within: Pit Villages and the Miners' Strike of 1984-85* (London: Routledge 1986), p5.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Simon Jenkins. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane 2007), p17.
[36]Ibid, p23.
[37] Ibid, p32.
[38] Ibid, p23.
[39] Ibid, p103.
[40] Nigel Lawson. *The View From Number 11* (London: Bantam Press 1993), p394.

Whitehall and other areas of the state were men, and men of a certain generation. For old-school middle and upper-class 'gentlemen' like them, argued Heseltine, it was not socially acceptable to argue with a woman - men deferred to women and did not speak back.[41] Thatcher's personal assistant, Janice Richards, found that deference and sycophancy more difficult to explain. She rejected the notion that Thatcher was dismissive of other people's opinions. While it was true that the Prime Minister's opinion on any given subject would inevitably be adopted by everyone else, reflected Richards, it was because no one else had the nerve to offer one. As she reflected, 'too few people dared to approach her.'[42]

Others have argued that Thatcher's hand-picked loyalists made it clear to any occasional dissenter that a pariah status could be expected for anyone foolish enough to be overly critical of the Prime Minister. One-nation Tory and Thatcher critic Ian Gilmour was told by arch-Thatcherite Nicholas Ridley that the Prime Minister's election victory in 1979 meant that, unlike previous British Prime Ministers, she now 'carried the responsibility of the Executive, just like the President of the United States.'[43] When Gilmour later tried to question a decision made by Thatcher, Ridley was despatched to tell him that 'she alone must be left to take the ultimate decisions which are important.'[44] Thatcher sacked Gilmour in September 1981.

Police historian Tom Cockcroft made the point that public organisations of the state were not entirely constrained by market forces, and that political and legal considerations were paramount – rather than financial considerations.[45] In such a climate, existing political biases might be magnified if kickstarted by an event such as the election of a well-liked and politically-aligned Prime Minister. The public organisation examined by Cockcroft, the police, revealed what the author called a 'structured and hierarchical culture' which came about because of an emphasis on structural stability and procedural regularity.[46] Adherence to, and preference for, hierarchy and stability might be seen to denote existing (small-c) conservatism within public organisations such as the police. In such an existing culture, elements of a conservative state might have existed long before the advent of Thatcher. It has been argued by Miliband that most state agencies, as they existed in liberal

[41] Michael Heseltine speaking in 'Margaret Thatcher: A Very British Revolution: Part3: Enemies,' Dir & Prod. Stephen Finnigan. *BBC i-Player*, 3rd June 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005pt1/ad/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-3-enemies
[42] Janice Richards speaking in 'Margaret Thatcher: A Very British Revolution: Part 2: Power,' Dir & Prod. Steve Condie. *BBC i-Player*, 29th May 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005hkn/ad/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-2-power
[43] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster 1992), p32.
[44] Ibid, p61.
[45] Tom Cockcroft. *Police Culture: Themes and Concepts* (New York: Routledge 2013), p14.
[46] Ibid

democracies, were not likely to be neutral in any case.[47] The author pointed to a long history of government-backed strike breaking and state agencies siding with employers against workers – a scene familiar in the modern histories of many Western democracies. Using state-coercion and state-sponsored violence, carried out for the supposed national interest, showed the state's natural position as a coercive instrument of the ruling-class, argued Miliband.[48]

As well as existing conservative biases within institutional culture, other authors have pointed out historic constitutional barriers which may have accounted for a lack of political neutrality from some within the state apparatus. Arguing as far back as the late nineteenth century, Bagehot pointed out that the two-party system, which has defined the British political system for two centuries, made it impossible for any sitting government to be anything other than sectarian.[49] However, the author felt that other elements of the state might be protected. A proponent of the constitutional monarchy, Bagehot believed that the danger of a despotic Prime Minister was offset by the fact that the monarch might step in, should the apparatus of the state be used by a 'zealot-like Premier.'[50] By the late 20th Century, however, much of the crown's power had been reduced. In the passing of legislation, royal assent was now little more than a polite hark back to former times. Such changes undermined the possibility of direct monarchical interference into political discourse, particularly in relation to policy. Bagehot had identified the British state's constitutional vulnerability to the whims of a future 'zealot-like' or 'despotic' Prime Minister. Without that outlet of monarchical interference, Bagehot argued that the possibility of such a Premier wielding unchallenged influence over the state was a distinct possibility. As a Tory shadow minister in 1976, Quintin Hogg also recognised Britain's constitutional flaw. Because of the archaic first-past-the-post electoral system and enforced party discipline, Hogg pointed out, government bills almost always passed through the Commons – a tendency towards executive dominance unseen elsewhere in Western democracies. That left the agencies of the state at the whim of an 'elective dictatorship' – the term Hogg coined to describe the constitutional dominance of the sitting Prime Minister and the governing party over Britain's state institutions.[51]

Legitimacy

[47] Ralph Miliband. *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (Aylesbury: Quartet Books 1974), p76.
[48] Karl Marx cited in Miliband, *the State in Capitalist Society*, p7.
[49] Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, p204.
[50] Ibid, p206.
[51] Quintin Hogg, 'The Richard Dimbleby Lecture,' Orig 1976. *BBC i-Player*, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00fr9gh (Accessed 15th July 2019).

'Consent by the public' was described by many authors as the main source of political legitimacy.[52] The three state agencies described in this research all operated in secret and adhered to stealth. Their existence and activities cannot, therefore, be legitimised in that way. Others have argued that 'an entity has political legitimacy…if it is morally justified in wielding its power.'[53] That is, political legitimacy can be brought about if the consequences of state action are for the greater good – though must still be carried-out within the boundaries of morality.[54] However, moral justification might be difficult to measure. Thatcher often conflated her ideological moorings with morality. If the Prime Minister and those acting within the secret groups felt morally justified, however, then deceptions such as adherence to stealth or pretending not to be involved might seem difficult to explain. A third interpretation states that democratic approval might bring about legitimisation. After the Tories second election triumph in 1983, those working within the state apparatus might have felt justified in carrying-out partisan activity - as long as it was ordered by a Prime Minister with a large mandate from the public. However, it might be argued that while the election landslide gave Thatcher and her loyalists 'effective authority,' that authority was being displayed by an amoral state that in fact denoted a lack of legitimacy.[55] A state that used oppressive and arbitrary force lost the legitimacy conferred to it under the rubric of the rule of law.[56] In the case of the groups highlighted here, difficult questions concerning legitimacy for activity which might be considered partisan could be bypassed entirely by the decision to carry out activities in secret and adhere to stealth.

In August 1985 the Clive Ponting case reached court in the United Kingdom. Ponting was a senior civil servant who had admitted leaking documents about the sinking of the *ARA Belgrano* in the Falklands War to Labour MP Tam Dalyell. During the case, Ponting's defence lawyers argued that 'the state consisted of those organs responsible to Parliament and ultimately to the voter and was separate from the partisan requirements of the sitting government.'[57] However, the jury members were told to ignore that definition by the sitting judge, Justice McCowan, who took a different view - 'the work of the state was synonymous with the requirements of the government in power.'[58] The Judge said that those who serve the state automatically serve the government and that there was no distinction. If McGowan's interpretation was correct, then legitimacy might be achieved without

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[52] See for instance Christopher Wellman, 'Liberalism, Samaritanism and Political Legitimacy,' *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 25.3 (October 1996), pp.211-237.
[53] Allen Buchanan. 'Political Legitimacy and Democracy' *Ethics* 112.4 (September 2002), pp.689-719. 689.
[54] Frederick Barnard, *Democratic Legitimacy: Plural Values and Political Power* (Chicago 1992), p65.
[55] Immanuel Kant. 'Perpetual Peace,' in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy* (Cambridge UP 1999).
[56] Bob Fine & Robert Millar (&eds.) 'Law of Market and Rule of Law,' in *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p20.
[57] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p97.
[58] Ibid.

public consent. As discussed, however, in the main public consent gave legitimacy – which meant that the secretive nature of the groups might be taken to reflect the opposite. Without legitimacy, a sitting Prime Minister's power over society might be considered to be a largely negative one - able to control sections of the population, but not in the sense of securing the cooperation necessary for the achievement of the government's policies.[59] Adherence to stealth meant a deliberate lack of public scrutiny and might be taken to denote a lack of moral authority on behalf of the Thatcherite state. Hall and Scraton have highlighted the government's deliberate criminalisation of the flying pickets during the strike. That was a way, argued the authors, of mobilising popular approval for the state's measures of containment and of gaining legitimacy.[60] The pickets had become 'politically threatening' and were criminalised to underpin the control functions of the state.[61] While that undoubtedly occurred during the strike, what happened with the three case studies detailed in this research was something altogether different. Legitimacy was never sought nor attained. In its place, strict adherence to stealth was the distinctive feature for the covert activities carried-out by those within the three groups. Whether the three groups, and indeed the Thatcher government, had legitimacy might come down to interpretation.

Thatcherism

Thatcherism has been described alternately as an ideological manifestation, a pre-planned economic programme or even a moral crusade. Hall defined Thatcherism as a struggle on several fronts at once. According to Hall, Thatcher and her loyalists managed to unify contradictory ideological strands. On the one hand the aggressive themes of neo-liberalism - self-interest, competitive individualism, and anti-statism.[62] On the other themes of organic Toryism – nation, family, duty, authority, traditionalism and patriarchism.[63] Hall coined the term Authoritarian Populism to define those two ideological strands of Thatcherism which he summarised as a 'blind spasm of control' coupled with a 'regression to a stone-age morality.'[64] The author believed that Thatcher and the Thatcherites merely represented themselves as anti-statist, for the purpose of political mobilisation and to construct popular consent.[65] In reality, argued Hall, Thatcherism was an ideology firmly rooted at the coercive end of the political spectrum. Jessop *et al*. argued that the disorganisation of

[59] Fine and Millar, 'Law of Market and Rule of Law,' p29.
[60] Stuart Hall & Phil Scraton, 'Law, Class and Control,' in Mike Fitzgerald, Gregor McLennan & Jennie Pawson, *Crime and Society: Readings in History and Theory* (London: Routledge 1995), p490.
[61] Ibid, p488.
[62] Hall, *Hard Road to Renewal*, p157.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Phil Scraton & Phil Thomas. *The State v the People: Lessons from the Coal Dispute* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1985), p255.
[65]Ibid, p152.

the political left was, in part, responsible for the ascendency of Thatcherism.[66] Those authors criticised Hall's description of Thatcherism because, they argued, it was too focused on the ideological - without an examination of the economic practices implemented by the Thatcher government. They argued that the goal of the Thatcherites was to completely re-structure the state system and its relations with civil society.[67] The authors said that one aim of Thatcherism was the purposeful creation of a polarised society. On the one hand, consolidation of an electoral coalition, including most of the middle-class, through redistributive policies and creating a new base of political consensus. On the other hand, resorting to coercion and denying basic rights to those outside of that coalition. Hall in turn criticised Jessop's description because, he argued, Thatcherism eschewed all concept of citizenship – including those within Jessop's coalition. As Hall pointed out, in Thatcherite rhetoric, 'worker is much less prevalent than wealth creator.'[68] Harvey highlighted the benefits that Thatcherism brought to the middle-classes – home ownership, acquisition of private-property and the championing of rampant individualism.[69] That was happening, argued Harvey, at the same time that working-class solidarities were waning under the pressure of Thatcherism's authoritarian wing.[70] The author introduced the term 'forced consent,' as middle-class values were forced, argued Harvey, upon working-class people.[71] As well as building electoral coalitions, Scraton pointed out the Thatcher administration's ability to sustain a high-level of consensus between the government and sections of the permanent state, including senior police officers, the magistracy and the judiciary.[72] That allowed for a united mobilisation of those forces against political protestors, the flying pickets, anti-nuclear demonstrators and other alien groups.[73]

Some authors have attempted to define Thatcherism in terms of the Prime Minister's own reactionary pronouncements attacking socialism. Saunders highlighted Thatcher's powerful rhetorical speeches in the late 1970s. Rather than seeing socialism as a rival economic system, the Prime Minister portrayed it as immoral.[74] That moralising of economic questions was a technique that Thatcher would use throughout her tenure – most notably the 'enemy within speech' in July 1984. Thatcherism, then, was not monetarism alone. (See main text for more on monetarism). Longstanding monetarists within the Conservative Party, such as Enoch Powell, had, according to

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[66]Jessop et al. 'Politics of Hegemony,' pp.87-101.
[67] Ibid
[68] Hall, *Hard Road to Renewal*, p159.
[69] David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (St Ives: Oxford UP 2007), p62.
[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid.
[72] Scraton & Thomas, *The State v the People,* p264.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Robert Saunders. 'Crisis? What Crisis? Thatcherism and the Seventies,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.25-43, p32.

Schofield, seen the ideology entirely as an economic endeavour – however necessary they thought it was.[75] It was Thatcher herself who added the moral rhetoric, later on.[76] Nicholas Ridley, one of Thatcher's longstanding allies within the Conservative Party and a committed monetarist, highlighted privatisation in his memoir as the key tenet of Thatcherism. Ridley argued that Britain's nationalised industries had been 'riddled with flaws' and that the ascent of loyalists to the top of the Party meant that that view was virtually unchallenged after 1984.[77]

Jenkins defined Thatcherism as encompassing two distinct revolutions – the widespread privatisation of industry highlighted by Ridley and, later, the authoritarian centralisation of local services.[78] Jenkins' work can be seen to compliment Jessop's earlier claims that Thatcherism sought to completely restructure parts of the system. Though insightful, however, neither author's work is based in any hard empirical evidence as none was available at their respective times of writing. Ali pointed to the endurance of Thatcherism. He argued that New Labour was a Thatcherite enterprise and that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were both descendants of the same ideological line.[79] Jenkins' book title, *Thatcher and Sons*, revealed that authors agreement with Ali's assertion. Ali however described Thatcherism as an ideology of the 'extreme centre' rather than the political right, with New Labour as Thatcher's most 'proud product.'[80] Echoing Hogg, Ali used the phrase 'constitutional dictatorship' – though the author places the Labour Party inside the 'dictatorship of capital.'[81] That is, an integral part of a Thatcherite constitutional dictatorship (both then and now) rather than any sort of opponent of it.

<u>The Miners' Strike and the 1980s</u>

Two of the three case studies examined in this research took place against the backdrop of the miners' strike. The third case study is also inextricably linked to government responses to that dispute. The debate surrounding the strike has recently returned to the public's collective consciousness, in the aftermath of the Hillsborough Inquest verdicts and the renewed calls for a similar inquest by the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign. Opinion regarding the strike remains deeply divided. At the time, Thatcher maintained publicly that the National Coal Board (NCB) had no choice but to stand up to the country's most powerful union, the leaders of which, she argued, were

[75] Camilla Schofield. *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (London: Cambridge UP 2009), p330.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Nicholas Ridley. *My Style of Government: The Thatcher Years* (London: Hutchinson 1991), p16.
[78] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p12, 92.
[79] Tariq Ali. *The Extreme Centre: A Warning* (London: Verso 2015), p5.
[80] Ibid, p15.
[81] Ibid, p12.

ignoring economic necessity by trying to maintain a raft of uneconomic, nationalised industries.[82] Scargill in turn argued that the pit closure programmes which led to the strike were part of a bigger Tory plan, to destroy the British trade union movement by stealth – in doing so massively decreasing the influence of working-class organisations throughout the country.[83]

Ackers explored the strike through two differing interpretations which he labelled 'orthodox Marxist' and 'Eurocommunist.'[84] The author was critical of those he described as orthodox – including Scargill himself. Ackers argued that class conflict, mass picketing and violence, along with the stated aim of striking for socialism, was a 'recipe for disaster' when used against Thatcher's hard-line monetarists, rather than Heath's soft-corporatist government.[85] Ackers speculated that the NUM and wider union movement should have focused on building alliances with newer social forces such as women's rights, ethnic minorities, the peace movement and environmentalism - building electoral coalitions which might have defeated Thatcher. Instead, concluded Ackers, Scargill exposed the miners and their families to state violence and ultimate failure.[86] Waddington gave a different take by arguing that the strike was based on industrial necessity in the face of widespread and enforced pit closures - and had little to do with already-existing political considerations.[87] The author offered the example of Britain's unemployed, many of whom used their meagre dole money to travel to, and join, picket-lines.[88] Despite that attempted act of solidarity, argued Waddington, the NUM refused to offer the unemployed any assistance – an act of self-interest which infuriated strike-supporting leftist groups such as Militant Tendency and the Socialist Workers' Party.[89] For the author, that lack of solidarity with those outside of the union, however unfortunate their circumstances were, showed that the strike was not about any grand political scheme. For Waddington, Scargill and the miners had no choice but to strike, while Ackers contended that doing so was unnecessary and played straight into their opponents' hands.

Richard Vinen argued that the 'class-war' narrative sometimes put forward by left-leaning academics is too simplistic, in that many sections of the working-class, particularly in the south-east, benefitted from Thatcher's new ideological direction and actively supported the government during

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[82] Margaret Thatcher. *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins 1993), pp345-371.
[83] Roy Ottey. *The Strike: An Insider's Story* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1985), p48.
[84] Peter Ackers, 'Gramsci at the Miners' Strike: Remembering the 1984-1985 Eurocommunist Alternative Industrial Relations Strategy,' *Labour History* 55.2 (March 2014) pp.151-172.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] David Waddington. 'Authorative Institutions,' in David Waddington, Maggie Wykes, & Chas Critcher (eds.) *Split at the Seams? Community Continuity and Change After the 1984-5 Coal Dispute* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p147.
[88] Ibid
[89] Ibid.

the dispute. That has to be weighed up, he conceded, against the admittedly negative effects of Thatcherism on some parts of the country.[90] Keith Gildart argued that the academic portrayal of striking miners has often been stereotyped, and that the men possessed a more complex identity than is often depicted. Pro-union narratives can be misrepresentative of working-class experiences, argued Gildart.[91] The author, who is an ex-miner, said that many miners were a-political and that political factionalism was a minority concern.[92] However, Gildart pointed out that the NUM membership was completely divided in 1984, including geographically. In north Wales for instance, the majority were committed to the strike – but a significant minority were against and solidarity was virtually non-existent at some pits.[93] Allen gave further evidence of polarisation by pointing out the lack of solidarity with the NUM in some other sectors. Some unions, such as the National Union of Seamen, the National Union of Railwaymen and Associated Locomotive Engineers, and the firemen's union, all backed the strikers.[94] However, significant unions in other sectors all agreed to cross picket lines. That lack of solidarity from the Electrical Power Engineers Association, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union meant that the biggest industrial consumers of coal continued receiving supplies throughout the strike.[95] David Howell described those who remained in work as Thatcher's 'defiant dominoes.'[96] The author pointed out Scargill's failed attempts to win a ballot for a national strike in both 1982 and 1983, as well as a leftwards shift at NUM Executive level in 1984.[97] In Thatcher's own memoir, she pointed out that those who continued to work during the strike were intimidated – including threats to kill aimed at wives and children.[98] The ex-Prime Minister claimed that the police had been pelted with bricks, darts and missiles during the strike, particularly at Orgreave.[99] For Thatcher, the police were engaged in 'the defence of democracy.'[100]

Rather than the government responding to militant miners, John Saville argued that senior Conservatives had been planning to attack the miners' union since at least 1977, when the party was

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[90] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), pp154-178.
[91] Keith Gildart, 'Mining Memories: Reading Coalfield Autobiographies,' *Labour History* 50.2 (June 2009), pp.139-161.
[92] Ibid
[93] Ibid
[94] Victor Allen, 'The Year Long Miners' Strike, March 1984-March 1985: A Memoir,' *Industrial Relations Journal* 40.4 (December 2009) pp.278-291.
[95] Ibid.
[96] David Howell. 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984-85 Strike,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.148-164, p150.
[97] Ibid, p151.
[98] Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p353.
[99] Ibid, p352.
[100] Ibid, p348.

in opposition. He highlighted the existence of the so-called 'Ridley Report,' which is discussed in the main text. Saville argued that the report was a blueprint of attack to be implemented once the Tories had regained power.[101] Fine and Miller highlighted what they saw as a concerted effort by Thatcher, her loyalists within the state, and the media to portray the strike as being exclusively about law and order.[102] The authors contend that this was an example of a deliberate, continued policy of conflating striking miners, and Labour's left, with international terrorism and criminality – a cynical move designed to move public consideration away from the real political and economic questions behind the dispute. Seamus Milne argued that Thatcher had personally authorised a 'get Scargill' campaign during the strike. The journalist contended that Thatcher's government used 'dirty tricks' such as surveillance, political manipulation, diplomatic deception and the use of agent provocateurs against the NUM.[103] In another example of polarised and conflicting memories of the strike, Milne directly challenged the ex-Prime Minister's memoir by asserting that the government's responses to the dispute had 'nothing whatever to do with the defence of democracy. Indeed, it represented the opposite.'[104]

Different interpretations of the role of the police during the strike are inherently tied-up with the views of state legitimacy, detailed above. The Marxist view is that police forces represent the point of contact between the coercive apparatus of the state and the lives of citizens.[105] The liberal view is that the state represents the general will of society, so those who act against the interests of the state should face the police. The occasional brutal and racist officer, so the liberals argue, can be purged from the force.[106] Vitale puts forward the view that the liberal defence is flawed, because it ignores the fact that the basic function of the police has never been about public safety or crime control.[107] According to Vitale, when elites feel that their system is at risk, they rely on the police to reassert control.[108] Graef explained the difficulties facing the police during the strike by highlighting picket-line violence perpetrated by the flying pickets and highlighted in Thatcher's memoirs. He argued that police memories of flashpoints such as the Brixton and Toxteth riots, in which many policemen were injured, were vital in understanding police responses. The author pointed out that many working-class policemen had been branded as class traitors by friends and

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[101] John Saville, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.
[102] Fine & Millar 'Law of Market and Rule of Law,' p2.
[103] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), Introduction p.XV.
[104] Ibid, p36.
[105] Alex Vitale. *The End of Policing* (New York: Verso 2017), p34.
[106] Ibid, p33.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Ibid, p34.

family for doing their jobs.[109] Looking back in his own memoir, Norman Tebbit argued that his colleague Leon Brittan had a tough task coordinating various regional forces against the flying pickets which he described as extremely violent in the pursuit of their goals.[110] However, Emsley argued that during the early 1980s, the police seemed to become increasingly associated with a strident law and order lobby and the abrasive polices of the Thatcher Government.[111] Scraton pointed out that the police also appeared to undergo a period of militarisation in the run-up to the strike.[112] In another work, Scraton placed the violent scenes witnessed at Orgreave on the 18th June 1984 within a linear progression of increasing police violence at picket-lines, stretching back to the Saltley Gate incident during the 1972 miners' strike. The author highlighted militaristic behaviour displayed by police at Orgreave such as horse charges, the drumming of riot shields and the truncheoning of pickets who had their backs to the attacking officers and were trying to flee.[113] Scraton drew a line from Saltley Gate through the Grunwick Dispute, the Lawrence Scott Episode and the *Warrington Messenger* strike, as, he argued, police violence at the picket line worsened significantly in the run-up to 1984.

When considering the broader context of the strike, Todd argued that the 1980s saw the growth of an increasingly global community of private-sector financiers, often aligned to politicians and political parties, who sought to advance a neo-liberal agenda that would increase their financial and political power.[114] Todd reminded her readers that the gains made by those financiers were made at the expense of the freedoms and living conditions of other people.[115] Focusing on Britain in another work, Todd pointed out high unemployment, discontent and violent confrontations as key signifiers of the eighties. She attributed all three to the divisive policies of the Thatcher government.[116] However, McSmith argued that left-leaning cultural depictions of the 1980s, and the strike in particular, have warped collective memory. The author highlighted rousing and partisan songs such as Billy Bragg's *Daddy, What Did You Do In the Strike?* And Pulp's *Last Days of the Miners' Strike* as being guilty for offering sentimentalised memory.[117] Several films and television episodes,

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[109] Roger Graef. *Talking Blues: The Police in Their Own Words* (London: Collins Harvill 1990), p60.
[110] Norman Tebbit. *Upwardly Mobile* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1998), p222.
[111] Clive Emsley. *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (Harlow: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1996), p179.
[112] Phil Scraton. *Power, Conflict and Criminalisation* (Oxon: Taylor and Francis 2007), p20.
[113] Phil Scraton. 'From Saltley Gates to Orgreave: A History of the Policing of Recent Industrial Disputes,' in Bob Fine & Robert Miller (eds.) *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p159.
[114] Selina Todd, 'Class, Experience and Britain's Twentieth Century,' in *Social History* 39.4 (December 2014), pp.489-508.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Selina Todd. *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010* (London: John Murray 2014), p321.
[117] Andy McSmith. *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable 2011), p154.

including Billy Elliott, were also highlighted.[118] Beckett explained polarisation through a geographical context. The author focused on the regional variations which took place during the Thatcher tenure by comparing the meteoric rise of the City in London with the demise of northern England's traditional industries.[119] Turner pointed out negative television caricatures of those from each side. The author reminded the reader of the benefit-claiming and criminally versatile Liverpudlians in *Bread*, and also Rik Mayall's thrusting young Thatcherite, Alan B'Stard.[120]

Power, authority and legitimacy within the economic, political and ideological context.

In analysing 'the state,' it is crucial to explore the relationship between power, authority and legitimacy. As Beetham explained, power is not necessarily legitimate. Forcible appropriation, exclusion or subjection is often the root cause of power.[121] Once power is obtained, subsequent power relations will be dominated by the appropriators who will act to give legality to their own original acquirement of power. The question, continued Beetham, became one concerning the character of the relationships of power. One of the focuses of this research is in analysing those relationships of power during the Thatcher tenure, their character, and whether that power was exercised with legitimacy. With regard to 'authority,' Beetham pointed out that it can exist both as an aspect of power relations (authority automatically reflecting power), and a means of power in its own right (power deriving from means of command).[122] The fact that the three groups studied here operated covertly and within stealth adherence means that further questions arise about authority and legitimacy. While the case studies will address this in regard to the secret groups, it is also necessary to consider the contextual developments discussed above. Economically, the Thatcherites had enthusiastically implemented economic aspects of the 'New Right' economic direction via widespread privatisation of industry. However, a key piece of contextual evidence concerning changing power relations can be seen in the accompanying centralisation of public services. Politically, the advent of such a strong personality might well have affected power relations at the top of the state, as argued by several commentators above. Why did the Thatcher government centralise power so absolutely? The three case studies gague any attempt at politicisation of the state, but Britain's susceptibility to what Hogg described as elective dictatorship will also be considered. The Ideological context surrounding Thatcher and Thatcherism may have brought about changing perceptions of the limits of power, and the necessity (or lack of necessity) concerning

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[118] Ibid.
[119] Andy Beckett. *Promised You a Miracle: Why 1980-82 Made Modern Britain* (St Ives: Faber 2015), p.XIX of Introduction.
[120] Alwyn Turner. *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum Press 2013), p233-235.
[121] David Beetham. *The Legitimisation of Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan 1991), p57.
[122] Ibid, p49.

legitimacy. Forced consent of middle-class values and authoritarian populism may have allowed for a reassessment, and a justification, of a more authoritative government/state relationship – though that will be tested fully in the case studies. The rise of the 'New Right' preceded Thatcher and sought to combine economic libertarianism and social authoritarianism.[123] At a glance, these two positions can appear difficult to reconcile. The case studies will look at how those working with in the Thatcherite state attempted to combine both ideological positions.

Organisation of the Thesis

Between the introductory chapter (1) and the concluding chapter (14), the main body of this research consists of three case studies which each investigate specific agencies within the state apparatus during Thatcher's second and third terms in office. However, the new evidence also contributed toward the understanding of developments which occurred prior to that period but are essential to fully understanding what followed – these are investigated and explained fully in Part 1.

Part 1: The Existing Framework provides new insights into key developments between 1972-1983 which are relevant to what occurred later during Thatcher's second and third terms. Part 1 is split into three chapters. These move chronologically toward the time period of the case studies. Chapter 2 gives evidence of a secretive and covert state agency set up by Edward Heath in 1972 that would later be revived during the Thatcher tenure. Chapter 3 details the rise of Conservative-aligned private-sector loyalists during the Tory period in opposition 1974-79. Chapter 4 looks at the first Thatcher administration and examines key developments in regard to the overall research questions. Overall, Part 1 uses original evidence to give a contextual overview of significant trends and developments within the state which preceded the 1984-1989 period. Parts 2, 3 and 4 constitute the three case studies. Each gives details of the existence and activities of a secretive and stealth-adhering agency as identified in the new evidence. Each of the three 'parts' are also split into three chapters examining a different aspect of practice. Part 2: The Downing Street Policy Unit looks at Thatcher's hand-picked policy unit inside Number 10. Chapter 5 shows how the DSPU involved itself in the early parts of the miners' strike, and the chapter also introduces the main figures within the DSPU. Chapter 6 provides evidence of DSPU activity in regard to the police and judiciary while chapter 7 looks at the later part of the strike. Part 3: The Central Intelligence Unit (Leicester Unit) reveals the existence of a secretive multi-agency group for the first time and examines the group's activity in line with the research questions. Chapters 8 and 9 examine the Leicester Unit's relationship with the Home Office, MI5 and the police and looks at the formation of the Unit.

[123] Phil Scraton. *Law, Order & the Authoritarian State* (Milton Keynes: Open UP 1987), p,vii.

Chapter 10 gives details of the activities of the secret organisation once it had been convened. Part 4: Subversion in Public Life (SPL) investigates another multi-agency group within the Thatcherite state which was involved in state activity regarding four other areas of the public sector. Chapter 11 examines the formation of the SPL and looks at activities taken within the rank-and-file civil service. Chapter 12 looks at SPL activity in regard to the education sector, while Chapter 13 investigates SPL initiatives toward both local councillors and NHS trade unionists. Overall, the thesis is made up of four parts which ae each split into three chapters – 12 chapters in total, plus an introductory and a concluding chapter bringing the total to fourteen. Part 1 provides a prelude and identifies political and ideological trends. Key contextual developments are also considered. Parts 2, 3 and 4 each offer a full investigation into the culture and activities of a specific, secretive state agency during the Thatcher period. Chapter 14, the conclusion, offers an evaluation of all the new evidence in relation to the research questions.

Part 1: The Existing Framework: 1972-1983

Introduction

Although the advent of Thatcher and Thatcherism were vital components in the weaponisation of the state, earlier developments discussed in this chapter provided a framework on which the culture of conformity was later established, though on a much larger scale under Thatcher. From 1972, the Tory government collaborated with private sector executives in a political initiative against supposed 'subversives' working within Britain's nationalised industries. At the same time, elements of the permanent state – including senior civil servants and MI5 officers - were used to target political opponents of the governing party. The events which took place between 1972 and 1983 are vital in understanding the intensified weaponisation of the state which would occur after the 1983 election landslide.

In 1972, the Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath, set-up the Subversion Home Committee (SHC), a small group of civil servants and Security Service (MI5) officers who were ordered to carry-out secret counter-subversion against trade unionists and left-wing 'subversives' at the Prime Minister's behest. The SHC's activities included the use of a sympathetic editor of a national newspaper who had agreed to smear political opponents of the government. The SHC used the private-sector blacklisting agency, the Economic League, to produce its own political blacklist which contained the names of known trade unionists from across several sectors. Between 1974-1979, during the Conservative period in opposition, the party embraced a new ideological direction and became close with chairmen and executives from leading private-sector companies who all paid into the Economic League. Under the new hard-line leadership of Margaret Thatcher, Tory MPs and private-sector loyalists formed organisations such as the Centre for Policy Studies which formulated future policy for the Conservative Party. Another Tory initiative, the Economic Reconstruction Group, produced the Ridley Report in 1978, a secret plan to attack the National Union of Mineworkers as the start of a wider plan to weaken Britain's public sector trade unions. Between 1979-1983, the first Thatcher government saw the likelihood of another coal strike increase as the Conservatives began the implementation of the Ridley Report – while the left-wing firebrand Arthur Scargill was elected to the Presidency of the NUM. Polarisation - between Thatcher and Scargill, and between the Tories and the NUM, was reflected across wider society during the period.

Chapter 2: The Subversion Home Committee and the Economic League 1972-74

In January 1972, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) called a nationwide strike after pay negotiations with the National Coal Board (NCB) broke down. It was the first time that British miners had been on an official, national strike since 1926. One month into the strike, the Yorkshire Area Branch Official, Arthur Scargill, organised the picketing of the Birmingham coking plant, Saltley Gate. Though just a branch official at that time, Scargill had convinced around 20,000 flying pickets – not only miners but also sympathetic members of local unions from other industries - to descend on the plant on the 10th February. The move forced the West Midlands Chief Constable, Derrick Capper, to ask the depot manager to close the plant, which was seen as an instrumental moment in the government's decision to back down shortly afterwards. Humiliatingly for the police, this was done in full view of the television cameras.[1] Prime Minister Edward Heath's Conservative government was forced into a climb-down, unconvincingly arguing that the government had suddenly realised that the miners were a 'special case.'[2] Though the strike in 1972 was primarily about pay and conditions, Scargill openly espoused his accompanying, ideological objectives. Using Marxian rhetoric, the Branch Official would call for the working-class to 'take over the means of production,' in order to 'create a new socialist society.'[3] For Scargill, Saltley Gate and the 1972 Miners' Strike was nothing short of a class-war, and a victorious one against Heath and the Tories.[4] The NUM had also become a target for Britain's small but committed Communist Party, which had been working quietly to secure the election of Party members to key NUM positions since the sixties, according to the CP's own industrial organiser, Bert Ramelson.[5] Mick McGahey, the NUM's Vice President from 1972 onwards, was a member of the CP's Ruling Committee.[6] Although Scargill had distanced himself from the CP by 1972, he remained on friendly terms with them, and often secured backing from them at crucial moments. For Margaret Thatcher, then Secretary of State for Education, Saltley Gate was a symbolic surrender for the police and the Conservative-led state, in the face of trade union militancy.[7]

The Miners' Strike of 1972 fed myths about the strength of the NUM. Sections of the media portrayed the dispute as an embarrassing defeat for Ted Heath and the Conservatives at the hands

[1] David Waddington, 'Public order policing in South Yorkshire 1984-2011: the case for a permissive approach to crowd control,' *Contemporary Social Science* 6.3 (November 2011), pp.309-324.
[2] Ibid
[3] Arthur Scargill, 'The New Unionism,' *New Left Review* 92 (August 1975), pp.3-34.
[4] Ibid
[5] Andy Beckett. *When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber 2009), p62.
[6] Ibid
[7] Ibid

of powerful union barons.[8] During the strike Heath was convinced that a secret group of subversives were pulling the strings behind the scenes - in order to further unspecified, left-wing aims.[9] Despite being told otherwise by Security Service (MI5) officers, Heath informed MI5 that he believed that the strike had the hallmarks of a 'masterplan' being put into operation by a 'subversive central organisation' of some kind.[10] Just two months after the strike ended, Heath's fears were compounded when two union leaders, Jack Jones of the Transport General Workers Union, and Hugh Scanlon of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, were allowed to address a Cabinet meeting – a move designed to lessen traditional hostility between trade unionists and the Conservative Party. However, ex-MI5 officer Peter Wright claimed that the Prime Minister had been 'appalled' and Heath later complained to other ministers that the two working-class men had 'spoken like communists.'[11] In the aftermath of that meeting, Heath decided that it was necessary to move against the trade unions if the Conservatives were to avoid further embarrassment in the future. However, the Tory government had felt the strength of Britain's trade unions during the miners' strike and Heath wanted to avoid another full-on confrontation.

Heath called for two courses of action. Firstly, the Tory government would need to develop better methods of covert counter-subversion, which could be deployed to damage leading trade unionists without a direct confrontation. Secondly, for those covert methods to be of any use, the government would need to know exactly who the subversives were – their names, which industry they were in, and their potential for subversive action. These two tasks, particularly the latter, would be onerous and time-consuming. Moreover, the secret collection of British citizens' personal data, by a sitting government, might be difficult to legitimise in public and would cause embarrassment - if it ever came to light. Such activity would have to be carried out in the utmost secrecy. In that context, five months after Saltley Gate and the end of the miners' strike, in July 1972, Heath established and convened a small committee of six senior ministers, chaired by himself, which would meet regularly to discuss 'the problem of subversion in modern society.'[12] The Home Secretary, Reginald Maudling, and Secretary of State for Employment, Maurice Macmillan, would be included. Completing the line-up were the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Alec Douglas-Home, the

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[8] Untitled Front Page Editorial, 'Do They Really Want to Bring Britain Down?,' *The Daily Mail Historical Archive*, Page 1, 17th February 1972, http://find.galegroup.com/dmha/newspaperRetrieve.do?qrySerId=&retrieveFormat=MULTIPAGE_DOCUMENT&sort=&docLevel=FASCIMILE&inPS=true&prodId=DMHA&userGroupName=edge&tabID=T003&resultListType=RESULT_ (Accessed 3rd May 2019).

[9] Christopher Andrew. *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of M15* (St Ives: Penguin 2010), p593.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Peter Wright. *Spycatcher* (New York: Viking Penguin 1988), p366.

[12] Minutes of the First Meeting of the Subversion Home Committee (SHC), Conference Room E, Cabinet Office, 3rd July 1972, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/494, p1. All subsequent references as 'SHC1.'

Secretary of State for Defence, Peter Carrington, and the Lord President of the Council, Robert Carr.[13] Carr might have seemed a particularly good choice for involvement. He had been instrumental in developing and introducing the Industrial Relations Act of 1971, which curbed the freedom to strike and abolished the closed shop.[14] At the group's first meeting, the Prime Minister set out the terms of reference, which would be to 'develop methods' which could be used 'against certain types of subversion.'[15] However, the ministers would require a task force in order to deliver those methods – as well as contribute to their development. It was agreed that the ministerial body should be supported by 'a small interdepartmental official group.' The second group would be staffed by a selection of handpicked permanent secretaries of state and two intelligence officers. The second group, named the Subversion Home Committee (SHC) was assembled for the first time on the 3rd July, tasked with creating and developing methods of counter-subversion, carrying out those methods, and reporting to Heath's ministerial group.

The SHC was a seven-person group chaired by Patrick Dean, a former ambassador to the United States who was also the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). The JIC was nominally responsible for the coordination and oversight of MI5, as well as Britain's other intelligence agencies General Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6). Dean was joined in SHC by other members of the intelligence community. John Jones, a serving MI5 officer, was recruited to take part. James Waddell, another recruit, was the Deputy Secretary to the Home Office who handled day-to-day liaison between MI5 and Whitehall.[16] The other members of the SHC were Norman Reddaway (Foreign and Commonwealth), Kenneth Barnes (Employment), and a group secretary, J Moss (See Appendix 1).[17] The seventh member was the Prime Minister's Chief Press Secretary, Donald Maitland. At the very first meeting of SHC, Dean reflected on the covert nature of the undertaking and told the other members that the 'existence of the [two] groups, ministerial and official, should in no circumstances become known.'[18] Dean revealed that, under instruction from the ministers, he had specific Terms of Reference, under which the SHC would now operate. '[U]nder the direction of the Lord President of the Council [Carr], to develop methods, including appropriate publicity and exposure, by which certain types of subversive activity can be countered [and] to implement[,] subject to ministerial approval, specific projects for

[13] SHC1, p1.
[14] Dennis Kavanagh, 'Obituary - Lord Carr of Hadley: Highly regarded Conservative minister whose Industrial Relations Act provoked bitter controversy,' *The Independent* 21st February 2012, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/lord-carr-of-hadley-highly-regarded-conservative-minister-whose-industrial-relations-act-provoked-7237343.html (Accessed 3rd May 2019).
[15] SHC1, p1.
[16] Wright, *Spycatcher*, p348.
[17] SHC1, p2.
[18] SHC1, p2.

this purpose and to make periodical reports to the ministerial group.'[19] The Terms of Reference were written with some plans regarding counter-subversion at least partially formulated. At the July meeting, Reddaway of the Foreign Office mentioned that he had already been holding secret talks with 'the Editor.'[20] Reddaway revealed that 'the Editor' was the proprietor of a major British newspaper. Although no names are mentioned in the newly-released (2018) evidence, in the controversial *Spycatcher* novel released in 1987, former MI5 officer Peter Wright identified 'the Editor' as Cecil King, owner of the *Daily Mirror*.[21] 'The Editor' had told Reddaway that, if SHC were to pass along information and stories about supposed subversives to him, he would be willing to use his publication to smear those in question.[22] Right from its inception, the SHC had a powerful counter-subversion weapon - the means to spread propaganda concerning political opponents. Although that was a powerful weapon, it would only be of any use if a list of subversives could first be amassed. Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon, who according to Wright the Prime Minister had taken a particular dislike to, were identified as targets by the SHC.[23] Both had been the subject of discussion concerning their alleged subversive activities and ideological leanings since the previous Labour government in the late sixties.[24] However, the SHC would need more than two names before they reported to the ministers' group. Jones of MI5 was asked whether the Security Service might be able to compile a multiple-industry list of subversives - a blacklist. However, the MI5 officer said that it would be 'beyond the resources of the Security Service to prepare a survey on an industry by industry basis.'[25] At that point, one SHC member pointed out that such a blacklist already existed – though outside of government hands. If it was a compiled blacklist of left-wing subversives that SHC needed, there was one organisation in the private sector which had been undertaking that very task for over half a century. At the end of the first meeting of SHC on the 3rd July 1972, in the last few lines of the minutes, it was decided that this group of senior civil servants and intelligence officers, who reported directly to the Prime Minister via the ministers' group, would contact the organisation known as the Economic League.[26]

The Economic League was an organisation dedicated to reactionary conservatism and historical opposition to the labour movement. The League operated by collecting and maintaining a

[19] SHC1, p2.
[20] SHC1, p3.
[21] Wright, *Spycatcher*, p369.
[22] SHC1, p3.
[23] SHC1, p3
[24] Ian Cobain, 'Wilson government used secret unit to smear union leaders,' *the Guardian* 24th July 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/jul/24/wilson-government-used-secret-unit-to-smear-union-leaders (Accessed 26th September 2018).
[25] SHC1, p2.
[26] SHC1, p4.

blacklist of alleged left-wing subversives, which large businesses and corporations would use to vet potential employees. Originally founded in 1919, the League was set up by powerful businessmen who began meeting in London to discuss the spread of working-class solidarity after the war, or as they referred to it in their literature, as the 'red infection.'[27] The League had adopted its deliberately unspecific name by 1926.[28] From early on in its inception, the League attracted ruling-class members from across several public and private sector industries. Rear Admirals, chairmen of big business in both finance and industry, and senior Tories were all to be found amongst the membership.[29] Early members included an ex-Tory Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour. Committed to an anti-socialist agenda, the world-view of the League's membership can best be gauged by the reflections of its President Auckland Geddes in 1925, who remarked that the British working-class had become 'infested with interlocking directorates of socialist and subversive organisations.'[30] The League's exclusive, rich, and politically-right-wing members existed to frustrate the growth of organised labour by denying union organisers and left-wing 'subversives' the chance of employment. For most of the twentieth century, the League had prosecuted a class war in the interests of capital.

In 1972, well before the inception of databases and spreadsheets, the League's blacklist existed in the form of a hard-copy 'Kardex' system, with each person on the blacklist given his or her own card.[31] Though centred in London, the League ran regional offices and kept Kardex systems in several other locations throughout England. By 1968, the League had built a large network of client companies, who all paid a subscription in return for access to the blacklist. That year, research by the Labour Research Group revealed the League's income to be £266,000 per-annum – all of it donations by large private companies.[32] The donations were supplied by a total of 154 corporations, including all of the major construction firms. Also included were 47 engineering companies, swathes of the manufacturing sector and nearly all of the major banks, hedge-funds and insurance companies including Barclays, National Westminster and the city traders NM Rothschild. Further large contributors were Britain's two oil majors, British Petroleum (BP) and Royal Dutch Shell Group (Shell). In return for their donations, each company would be supplied with a phone number. During periods of recruitment, staff would call the number with a list of prospective employees' names. Within a few days, the client company would get a call back, revealing whether any of the names were on the League's subversion blacklist. The company would then be free to deny work to the

[27] Mike Hughes. *Spies at Work: The Definitive History of the Economic League* (London. Lulu 2012). p7.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Fifty Fighting Years, Official Economic League Pamphlet issued 1969 in Hughes, Spies at Work, p240.
[31] Mike Hughes, 'Anatomy of a Blacklist, *Spiesatwork.org.uk,* July 2014, http://spiesatwork.org.uk/resources/Anatomy+of+a+blacklist.pdf (Accessed 3rd May 2019).
[32] Ibid.

prospective employee, without ever disclosing why. An internal memo from the League's London headquarters revealed in 1961 that, 'any company can apply to the League's headquarters opposite Buckingham Palace to check if a prospective employer is a communist sympathiser.'[33] It has been alleged by Mike Hughes, the journalist who spent decades attempting to bring to light the League's activities, that many people on the list were kept out of work for years, uninformed of the real reason why their job interviews were unsuccessful. Hughes has also alleged that the League had a longstanding relationship with MI5, going back nearly as long as the League's own long history. The journalist is not the only person to make that claim. In Peter Wright's *Spycatcher,* the author highlighted the activities of his associate and political 'fixer' Victor Rothschild – the Chairman of family banking dynasty and League donator – NM Rothschild. Victor Rothschild had worked for MI5 during the war and had, in the early seventies, maintained close links with senior MI5 officers, including Wright himself.[34] He was also Head of Research at another League donator Shell, a role which meant that he controlled thirty laboratories worldwide - an extensive scientific apparatus which he offered to make available to MI5 for the development of intelligence technology.[35] With perhaps more than a touch of anti-Semitism, Wright alleged that 'there are few threads in the seamless robe of the British establishment which have not passed at one time or another through the eye of the Rothschild needle.'[36] However, the author insisted that Rothschild's contacts, in politics and intelligence, were very real - and nothing short of 'legendary.'[37] Rothschild's boardroom co-worker at Shell was the oil giant's chairman, David Barran - the President of the Economic League throughout most of the 1970s.[38] Though Rothschild operated in the private sector, he had good relationships with several Tories which, alongside his longstanding connections with MI5, made the NM Rothschild Chairman an influential figure in the political realm. Heath awarded him an official state role in 1970 by making him the Head of the Prime Minister's policy think-tank - the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS).[39] Through Rothschild, both MI5 and members of the Conservative government had easy access to the Economic League.

During the first meeting in July, the SHC had announced that MI5 did not possess an industry-by-industry list of subversives, nor had the manpower to compile such a list. Five months later, after contact with the Economic League, that was no longer the case. In November the SHC minutes recorded that, rather than suffering from any lack of subversive targets, the group now had

[33] Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p237.
[34] Wright, *Spycatcher*, p117.
[35] Ibid, p118.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid, p117.
[38] Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p212.
[39] Ibid, p212.

too many subversives to pursue. The SHC members had become so busy that a number of sub-groups had had to be formed in the interim – each tasked with developing and implementing its own methods of counter-subversion and reporting back to the overseeing SHC group. One of these sub-groups was named the 'industrial subgroup' and was under the supervision of Waddell of the Home Office. Waddell officially stated his sub-group's own terms of reference: 'to supervise and direct the collection of intelligence about threats to the internal security of Great Britain arising from subversive activities, particularly in industry, and to make regular reports to the ministers concerned.'[40] Waddell revealed that the collection and compilation of evidence was now well underway.[41] It was not revealed where the glut of new information being used by Waddell's sub-group, nor the wider SHC, had come from. However, Maitland of the Prime Minister's Office offered an anecdote. Maitland told the other members that he had been approached just weeks before by executives from the rubber giant, the Dunlop Group - a firm with longstanding ties to the British government. The Dunlop executives had wanted to know whether there was 'any way in which a firm could be warned when it was in danger of employing an individual who was known to have been a subversive.'[42] They were awaiting an answer from Maitland. The Prime Minister's Assistant reflected during the meeting that 'the government could help [Dunlop] by giving unofficial publicity to serve as adequate warning for firms.'[43] Once again, the SHC members referred to Cecil King who, they revealed, had already been supplied with photographs to be used to smear some individuals identified by the SHC as subversive. Reddaway of the FCO also informed the group that King had, just that week, ran a series of stories entitled '*the Strifemakers*,' which would smear senior union men whose details had been passed along by the SHC.[44] The group debated on the merits and pitfalls of passing their newly acquired blacklist directly to the Dunlop executives. Maitland concluded, however, that this would be too risky. It was decided that Maitland would tell the executives that they 'should seek help [directly from] the Economic League.'[45]

In December 1973, a full year after the SHC gained its own copy of a blacklist and began passing information on to 'the Editor,' the group was able to reveal that it now had in its possession a 'series of reports' on subversion and subversives, across different industries.[46] The group had also reported to the ministers' group on the 'security significance' of those individuals included in the

[40] Minutes of Fourth Meeting of the Subversion Home Committee, Conference Room E, Cabinet Office, 3rd November 1972, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/494, p1. All subsequent references as 'SHC4.'
[41] SHC4, p1.
[42] SHC4, p2.
[43] SHC4, p2.
[44] SHC4, p3.
[45] SHC4, p2.
[46] Minutes of Twelfth Meeting of the Subversion Home Committee, 17th December 1973, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/484, p2. All subsequent references as 'SHC12.'

reports.[47] The December 1973 meeting of SHC was also significant in that a new member of the group was in attendance. Robert Armstrong of the Prime Ministers' Department was introduced to the other members. Just as Waddell had led an industrial subgroup, Armstrong would chair a sub-branch of SHC known as the Subversion in Public Life Group (SPL). SPL was to be primarily focused on subversion within the civil service.[48] Armstrong's involvement is significant in light of the later, 1984-85 miners' strike, in which he would come to prominence, in a more senior position, but engaged in the same field of work. As Cabinet Secretary under Thatcher, Armstrong would take Patrick Dean's role of SHC Chair (see case studies 2 and 3 for full details).

Regardless of the work of Heath's SHC, the relationship between the NUM and the Conservative government had not changed. It has been argued that Scargill and the flying pickets were instrumental in forcing Heath into calling an impromptu general election in 1974, after a raft of further strikes.[49] Amongst Tory politicians, anti-NUM hardliners such as MP for Cirencester and Tewkesbury, Nicholas Ridley, had initially wanted an election. He felt that a large Tory majority, as predicted in the polls, would strengthen the government's hand and allow the Tories to be tougher in their negotiations with the then NUM President, Joe Gormley.[50] However, the Tories were hampered by Heath's stilted public appearances and a series of damaging reports which revealed poor economic growth in the run up to election-day. The 1974 election also saw a surge in support for the Liberal Party, an unexpected development which harmed the Tories at the polls much more than it did Labour. The peculiarities of the British electoral system meant that the Liberal surge harmed the Tories without allowing them to gain any more influence of their own. Though the Liberals got six million votes, this transformed into a mere 14 seats. The Tories still got the largest share of the vote, but this was not reflected by the first-past-the-post electoral system, which saw the Tories trailing Labour by four seats. Heath's election gamble had backfired in the most spectacular fashion. Attempting to cling to power amid a wave of criticism from every direction, including hard-line rebels inside his own party, Heath met with Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe in the hope of forming a coalition. However, talks broke down over Thorpe's wish to become Home Secretary. Heath later admitted that aides had told him that 'things in Thorpe's private life, as yet undisclosed to the public, might make this a highly unsustainable position for him to hold.'[51] It was

[47] SHC12, p2.
[48] Armstrong, as Cabinet Secretary, reminisces about his previous role during a meeting in 1985, Record of Meeting between Armstrong, Jones of MI5 and others, 15th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/484.
[49] David Waddington. 'Public order policing in South Yorkshire 1984-2011: the case for a permissive approach to crowd control,' *Contemporary Social Science* 6.3 (November 2011), pp.309-324.

[50] Beckett, *Britain in the Seventies*, p146.
[51] Ibid, p153.

left to the Labour Party to form a minority government. After the defeat, Heath's political secretary Douglas Hurd wrote in his diary that, in the ongoing battle between the Tories and the NUM, the party was now 'wandering vainly over the battlefield, looking for someone to surrender to.'[52] The NUM had been instrumental in forcing Heath to call the election. As such, Heath's defeat once again fed myths about the industrial and political strength of the miners' union.[53] However, Joe Gormley, who was considered a moderate by National Coal Board wage-negotiators, had no intention of bringing down the government. Heath had chosen to go to the country, despite negative opinion regarding his handling of the strike and widespread public sympathy for the miners' cause.[54] Heath had campaigned by asking the nation who ran the country. The electorate had decided that it certainly wasn't him. As Hurd's comment revealed, however, some within the Tory Party viewed the election loss not in terms of defeat to Labour but rather in terms of defeat to the NUM. For them, Heath was also to blame for showing weakness in confronting the miners.

[52] Ibid, p86.
[53] David Howell. 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984-85 Strike,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.148-164, p148.
[54] Ned Smith. *The 1984 Miners' Strike: The Actual Account* (Whitstable: Oyster Press 1997), p9.

Chapter 3: Private-Sector Loyalists and the Ridley Report 1974-79

During the 1950's and 60's, successive British governments had adhered to the post-war settlement. The country had kept to a social-democratic, Keynesian economic programme, based upon a symbiosis of free-market capitalism and government planning.[1] Although primarily a capitalistic economy, the government would step in when needed, propping up struggling industries until those sectors had recovered their own feet. Key industries, including Coal, were fully nationalised. Throughout those decades, Britain had experienced consistently low levels of unemployment. The country was home to a network of nationalised public services, protected by a robust network of public sector trade unions, with the NUM seen as the jewel in the crown. By the mid-1970s, however, the economic growth evident in those previous decades seemed to have broken down. Inflation was surging, causing a series of fiscal crises for Britain, which included a bail-out from the International Monetary Fund in 1975-6, to ward off bankruptcy.[2] As such, some looked for a new economic direction. The mid-1970s had seen a revival, mainly in Britain and the United States, of doctrines of the free-market, both as ideology and as political economy.[3] At the forefront of this new ideological direction was the neo-liberal doctrine of monetarism, championed by economists such as Milton Friedman.[4] Central to all neo-liberal doctrine was a belief in the superiority of individualised, market-based competition over other modes of economic organisation.[5] Named the *Chicago School* after the university that Friedman taught at, the free-market fundamentalists were highly critical of state involvement in economic issues. Moreover, they saw near-full employment as a negative manifestation. They believed that the absence of any fear of bankruptcy or unemployment had swung the pendulum of power too far to the side of the workers. They pointed to the huge increase, under Keynesianism, of the bargaining power of the trade unions. That was a major cause, argued the monetarists, of Britain and America's economic stagnation. As such, the monetarists were hostile toward the very idea of trade unions, which they saw as artificial barriers to unregulated laissez-faire.

In Britain, an early adherent to monetarist doctrine was the Conservative Secretary of State for Social Services, Keith Joseph. Joseph was an influential member of the monetarist think-tank, the *Institute of Economic Affairs* (IEA). Since its inception in 1955, the IEA had argued for a move toward

[1] Victor Allen, 'The Year Long Miners' Strike, March 1984-March 1985: A Memoir,' *Industrial Relations Journal* 40.4 (December 2009) pp.278-291.
[2] David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (St Ives: Oxford UP 2007), p12.
[3] Allen, 'The Year Long Miners' Strike,' pp.278-291.
[4] Andrew Gamble, 'Neo-Liberalism,' *Capital and Class* 75 (October 2001), pp.127-135.
[5] Neil Rollings, 'Cracks in the Post-War Keynesian Settlement? The Role of Organised Business in Britain in the Rise of Neoliberalism Before Margaret Thatcher,' *Twentieth Century British History* 24.4 (December 2013) pp.637-659.

unregulated laissez-faire.[6] After the Tory election defeat of 1974, Joseph became Shadow Home Secretary. He also became the de-facto leader of a group of rebels within the Conservative Party, who advised that the Tories should move away from traditional conservatism, abandon adherence to the post-war settlement, and embrace Friedman-style monetarism. One of Joseph's allies was fellow monetarist Nicholas Ridley. Ridley was an archetypal Tory of a certain kind - an old-Etonian, Oxford graduate and outspoken critic of socialism. He had been aligned to the Conservative Party since his Oxford days and had championed monetarist theory since the 1960s, when the ideology was nothing more than a fringe theory.[7] In 1974, Ridley was open about his involvement in Joseph's rebel group. Like Joseph himself, Ridley felt that the leadership of Ted Heath had been a disaster for the party – culminating in the election defeat of 1974. As well as a penchant for free-market fundamentalism and a deeply-entrenched dislike of socialism, Ridley felt that Heath's weakness in the face of trade union militancy, particularly in the form of the NUM, had cost the Tories that election. Ridley was personally unhappy with the Heath tenure, and believed that the former leader was responsible for leading the party off course, not only in the case of the election defeat but also ideologically.[8] In 1972, Heath had appointed Ridley to a policy group tasked with determining privatisation policy for the Conservative government. However, Ridley soon became disillusioned at what he saw as dithering and backtracking from the party leader. After Heath attempted to move Ridley sideways, Ridley resigned, declaring that he wanted nothing more to do with a Heath-led government, and returned to the back benches.[9] Ridley's ingrained dislike of socialism, his fondness for monetarism and his personal dislike for Heath made him a willing member of Joseph's rebels.

Heath's election defeat had strengthened the position of the Tory monetarist rebels. However, they did meet with stern opposition from traditional one-nation conservatives within the Party. Ian Gilmour, who had been Secretary of State for Defence prior to the election defeat, denounced the monetarists on two counts. Firstly, that strict adherence monetarism was no different to strict adherence to socialism. Secondly, that strict adherence to any doctrine was anathema to traditional Conservative Party politics. Gilmour would later denounce monetarism as 'simple-minded, text-book economics.'[10] Nevertheless, the monetarist group continued to win over supporters. According to Ridley, a vital ally was secured later in 1974. At that time, Margaret Thatcher became a staunch adherent to monetarism and allied herself with the Joseph group.[11] According to Ridley, he, Joseph and Thatcher were all heavily influenced by, and met regularly with,

[6] Gamble, 'Neo-Liberalism,' pp.127-135.
[7] Nicholas Ridley. *My Style of Government: The Thatcher Years* (London: Hutchinson 1991), p12.
[8] Ibid, p2.
[9] Ibid, p4.
[10] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster 1992), p14.
[11] Ridley, *My Style*, p7.

Alan Walters, a monetarist economist based at the London School of Economics.[12] Walters, who knew Friedman personally, was, like his friend, an open supporter of Augusto Pinochet in Chile.[13] With American backing, Pinochet had overthrown the democratically-elected left-wing government in Chile, and turned the country into the first fully-monetarist state. Also like Friedman, Walters visited the Dictator in Santiago numerous times. Walters neither supported nor condemned the repression that Chile's *Chicago School* policies appeared to necessitate.

After the 1974 election, with Labour in power, the SHC and its sub-groups were shut down, or at least scaled back. Papers released from the Thatcher-era confirm that, stating that the groups were later 'revived' in the 1980s (See Case Study 3 for full details).[14] One significant exception to the roll-back of covert counter-subversion was MI5 and the intelligence community. According to Peter Wright, most longstanding Security Service officers were unhappy with the Labour government and continued to be Conservative-aligned.[15] In the final days before the 1974 election, it became increasingly likely as election-day approached that Labour would get into number 10. At that time Victor Rothschild, head of Heath's policy think-tank and board member of two Economic League backers, organised a meeting between Wright, fellow MI5 officers and a collection of private-sector loyalist 'sympathisers.'[16] One of those present was the retired army General, Walter Walker. Walker was known to describe himself as an English Pinochet in waiting, who believed that a military coup was needed if the Conservatives were to break trade union power in Britain.[17] Joining them was a collection of chairmen and executives of large companies from across several private-sector industries. One of the latter was Nicholas Cayzer, the head of British and Commonwealth Shipping. Cayzer was the Vice-President of the Economic League.[18] At the meeting, Wright was told that the attendees 'represent[ed] a group of people who [were] worried about the future of the country.'[19] With such concerns, they told Wright, they wanted, at all costs, to 'prevent the return of a Labour government to power.'[20] The group wanted Wright to supply evidence which could be used to smear Labour leader Harold Wilson in the press. Wright later claimed to have gone straight to the MI5 Director General, Michael Hanley, ready to give a full report to his superior concerning the attempts, by the ruling-class subversives, to recruit him. According to *Spycatcher*, Hanley replied

[12] Ibid
[13] Andy Beckett. *Promised You a Miracle: Why 1980-82 Made Modern Britain* (St Ives: Faber 2015), p47.
[14] See Minutes of Meetings at Cabinet Office which discuss 'reviving' SPL, 15th January and 18th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[15] Peter Wright. *Spycatcher* (New York: Viking Penguin 1988), p369
[16] Ibid, p368.
[17] Richard Vinen. 'Thatcherism and the Cold War,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.199-217, p206.
[18] Mike Hughes. *Spies at Work: The Definitive History of the Economic League* (London: Lulu 2012), p214.
[19] Wright. *Spycatcher*, p368.
[20] Ibid

that Wright should 'leave it well alone,' a surprising directive given MI5's clear interest in left-wing and working-class subversives.[21] Hanley's predecessor, Martin Furnival-Jones, later admitted that MI5 had been aware of the coup plans since 1968 - though he dismissed the plotters as 'a pretty loony crew.'[22] The journalist and Economic League expert Mike Hughes has disputed the claims made in *Spycatcher*. He has argued that, rather than the concerned, hand-wringing observer Wright claimed himself to be, he was probably among the coup plotters before nervousness got the better of him.[23] MI5 officers had taken part in Heath's SHC group which had carried-out counter-subversion against trade unionists – but the targeting of a Prime Minister was quite another thing. Wright alleged the existence of a further internal plan, discussed by Security Service officers, to leak damaging material concerning Wilson to the press, in the run-up to the election.[24] Although in 1987 only Wright's word existed as evidence of that plan, the same allegations were made in a BBC dramatized documentary in 2006.[25] The resurfacing of the 'Wilson plot' allegations forced MI5 to address the issue on the agency's official website. MI5 criticised Wright and claimed that his evidence was 'exaggerated.'[26] However, the agency did not attempt to deny that the plot took place.[27] What can be said for certain due to the evidence in this research is that the smearing apparatus already existed via the SHC and 'the Editor,' and that MI5 had taken part in that initiative. In any case, the Tories were defeated at the ballot box. According to *Spycatcher*, the Labour election victory in 1974 signified a big change in the Security Service. It was no coincidence, argued Wright, that 'intelligence on domestic subversion became the overriding priority' for the officers of the Security Service after 1974.[28] A particular bone of contention for the MI5 officers was the Labour plan to open up MI5 and make it more accountable to parliament.[29]

Margaret Thatcher's unexpected Conservative leadership election victory in February 1975 saw the monetarists take control of the Conservative Party for the first time.[30] The new Leader of the Opposition denounced the Tory MP's not fully committed to monetarism – referring to them as

[21] Ibid.
[22] Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p190.
[23] Ibid, p214
[24] Wright, *Spycatcher*, p369
[25] 'The Plot Against Harold Wilson.' Dir Paul Dwyer. Orig BBC 2006. Uploaded. *Youtube* 18th August 2018. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3-gT7CUA2o (Accessed 4th July 2019).
[26] Untitled 'The Wilson Plot,' *MI5.gov*, undated, https://www.mi5.gov.uk/the-wilson-plot (Accessed 4th July 2019).
[27] Ibid
[28] Wright, *Spycatcher*, p369.
[29] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p70.
[30] 'Margaret Thatcher: A Very British Revolution: Part 1: Making Margaret.' Dir & Prod. James House. *BBC i-Player*, 20th May 2019. Viewed 9th June 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005br9/ad/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-1-making-margaret

'wets.' Thatcher attacked some of the entrenched forms of class power and aristocratic tradition that dominated the military, the judiciary and the financial elite, much to the disdain of traditional conservatives such as Gilmour. The target for most of Thatcher's rhetoric was, however, the political Left, as the new Leader of the Opposition regularly displayed an apparent emotional and moral abhorrence toward socialism. In a 1977 Shadow Cabinet meeting, Thatcher announced that, for her, the real case against socialism was 'not its economic inefficiency, [but] its basic immorality.'[31] On the election campaign trail in 1979, Thatcher repeatedly linked socialism with 'evil,' without ever explaining what she meant by the word socialism.[32] Rather than talking about any economic benefits or drawbacks of competing economic systems, Thatcher, Ridley and the monetarists portrayed themselves as moral crusaders, whose mission was to eliminate socialism from British society.[33] Rather than viewing Britain's economic problems in terms of policy failings, the Conservative leadership after 1975 began to view those problems in line with monetarist theory - as symptoms of a long-term malaise in both the British economy, and British society.[34] Thatcher and her presumed mentor, Joseph, believed that if an incoming Conservative government was to deliver monetarism in a democratic society, the tenets of the Keynesian system – the welfare state, the nationalised industries, as well as working-class institutions such as the trade unions - had to be attacked and dismantled. In their place, industries would be fully privatised. As Joseph reflected in 1975, 'monetarism is not enough.'[35] However, the Tories needed a detailed plan, a strategy of how they would go about implementing their attacks and open up those markets to privatisation, should they return to power, as expected, at the next general election.

With his fellow monetarists now at the helm of the Party, Nicholas Ridley had been asked to join a Conservative, parliamentary speech-writing team, alongside Norman Tebbit and Nigel Lawson. The purpose of this team was to discuss and devise the best strategies for harassing Wilson during Prime Minister's Questions.[36] As a fellow monetarist back from the rebel days, and someone whose writing skills were being sharpened against Wilson, Ridley may well have seemed like the perfect choice for Thatcher and Joseph, as they looked for a candidate to write the plan of attack on the barriers to monetarism. Ridley's devotion to monetarism was second to none. In 1975, Ridley's admiration for Pinochet led him into a series of meetings with General Walter Walker, the man who

[31] Robert Saunders. 'Crisis? What Crisis? Thatcherism and the Seventies,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.25-43, p32.
[32] Ibid, p33.
[33] Ibid, p40.
[34] Jim Tomlinson. 'Thatcher, Monetarism and the Politics of Inflation,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.62-77, p62.
[35] Saunders, 'Crisis? What Crisis?,' 39.
[36] Ridley, *My Style*, p11.

described himself as an English Pinochet and had been present at Victor Rothschild's meeting of coup plotters. According to Walker, Ridley often insinuated that he agreed with the idea of a military coup, though 'didn't have the guts to say it outright.'[37] In early 1977, Thatcher and Joseph tasked Ridley with formulating a privatisation plan via a Tory-populated think-tank, the Economic Reconstruction Group (ERG). This was a repeat of Ridley's brief under Heath, from five years earlier. However, Ridley was 'delighted' to accept, given that, unlike that original brief, this was issued by a leadership more ideologically-compatible with Ridley himself.[38] Early in 1978, Ridley released the ERG's report.

Ridley's report was a detailed blueprint on how to firstly provoke, and secondly win, a battle against the so-called 'barriers' of monetarism. The report suggested several steps in order to achieve the stated, monetarist goals of 'fragmentation' and 'denationalisation' of key industries.[39] Echoing the contemporary monetarist thinking of Joseph and Walters, Ridley outlined the motivation behind his report. He listed five objectives, which an incoming Tory government should look to implement. Breaking up the power of the 'monopolistic' public sector trade unions, rooting out inefficiency, spreading responsibility within management, the linking of worker reward and effort, and facilitation of denationalisation.[40] Ridley argued that previously, there had been too much 'carrot' and not enough 'stick,' in regard to negotiations with public sector trade unions.[41] Quoting neoliberal doctrine, he argued that the lack of fear of redundancy meant that financial discipline within the nationalised industries could never be achieved. Ridley was clear, in no uncertain terms, that 'plants must be closed and people must be sacked.'[42] The Ridley Report suggested that the first step on the road to privatisation should be to provoke and attack one of Britain's powerful trade unions.[43] Despite its polemical language, however, the Report was much more than a vague proposal to be taken or left. Rather, it was a detailed stratagem which gave precise recommendations on how to prepare for and win the battle, once provoked.

In the confidential annex to the Ridley Report, it was suggested that an incoming Conservative government should look to provoke a battle in a non-vulnerable industry, where the

[37] Vinen, ''Thatcherism and the Cold War,' p206.
[38] Ridley, *My Style*, p15.
[39] Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group 1978 (the Ridley Report), *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795 9Accessed 3rd May 2019). All future references as 'RR.'
[40] RR, p16.
[41] RR, p1.
[42] RR, p4.
[43] RR, Confidential Annex, p24.

Tories would be most likely to win.[44] The nationalised industries were put into lists of vulnerability, in order to assess which one the government should attack. The report warned against an attack on the Electricity, Gas or Water industries, due to the small amount of time the country could last without those particular amenities. However, the first name on the 'vulnerable' list was Coal.[45] The Report pointed to the government's victory over striking postal workers in 1971 as the model for success. It was suggested that a real 'opportunity' could lie in destroying one of the 'vulnerable' industries. Such would be the damage, 'it would be irreversible by a future Labour government.'[46] After a fight in a pre-chosen industry had been provoked, continued the Report, the Tories would only need to sit back and wait for a spark to ignite the fuse. It was presumed that the spark would come over wage claims or redundancies.

The Report also warned that any incoming Tory government should be aware of the 'communist disruptors' of Britain's trade union movement whom, the Report claimed, would be all too happy to 'exploit [any] discontent.'[47] In order to counter the political threat, continued the Report, haulage companies which employed non-union drivers should be recruited to 'help us move coal when necessary.'[48] Also, power stations should be converted to oil-firing, undermining the country's dependency on coal.[49] In the Report's confidential annex, Ridley suggested specific precautions be set in place to deal with the formidable flying pickets of the NUM, whom he described as the 'Saltley Gate mob,' a reference to the 1972 miners' strike.[50] The report suggested that a large, mobile squad of police be assembled. Also, that financial legislation be brought in to 'cut off the supply of money to the strikers' during the coming, planned conflict.[51] Ridley also suggested stockpiling supplies of coal in order to prepare for the coming battle.[52] He went on to recommend that 'sympathetic chairmen' should be recruited and put in place, before the plan was implemented.[53] However, Ridley feared the formidable strength of the trade unions within Britain's nationalised industries. As such, the Report warned against a full-on confrontation with an admittedly strong foe. Instead, it was suggested, the next Tory government should seek to return the 'industries to the private sector more or less by stealth.'[54] Publicly, a future Tory government would feign political neutrality in regard to the dispute which it had secretly initiated. Covertly, the

[44] RR, Confidential Annex, p24.
[45] RR, p16.
[46] RR, p17.
[47] RR, Confidential Annex, p24.
[48] RR, Confidential Annex, p25.
[49] RR, Confidential Annex, p25.
[50] RR, Confidential Annex, p25.
[51] RR, Confidential Annex, p25.
[52] RR, Confidential Annex, p25.
[53] RR, p14.
[54] RR, p15.

Tories would 'apply a whole series of different techniques' to defeat the targeted union and bring about the privatisation of the sector.[55]

Despite their preferred political party being in opposition, the period continued to be a prosperous one for the Economic League, funded as it was by its private sector benefactors. The usual names continued to keep the League in robust health. In 1975, Shell was the joint highest contributor to the League (alongside Barclays Bank) with a donation of £5,400.[56] After the discovery of North Sea Oil, the League had expanded its operations to Scotland, setting up a new branch in Aberdeen.[57] From there Shell, BP and the American oil giants could all have easy access to the new, Scottish Kardex blacklist. The League was not the only example of private-sector political activity during the Tory period in opposition. In the absence of the state-sponsored SHC, an extra-state organisation sprang up containing Tory MPs, retired intelligence officers and old armed forces top brass. In 1975, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) was set-up by new Leader of the Opposition, Margaret Thatcher, and her private-sector loyalists, Ross and Norris McWhirter. Despite officially being a private sector enterprise, the CPS was charged with developing policy for a future Tory government, in conjunction with Keith Joseph.[58] Victor Rothschild seconded one of his most trusted young bankers, John Redwood, to the CPS.[59] Other prominent members to the CPS were founder of the SAS and outspoken anti-trade-unionist, David Stirling, Chairman of the Tory 1922 Committee and ex intelligence officer, Airey Neave, and Brian Crozier, whom Hughes alleged was a CIA agent.[60] Crozier was also the head of the 'Shield' organisation, a secret committee tasked with briefing Thatcher on world politics and fighting subversion.[61] With the Tories in opposition, the CPS became a meeting ground between private-sector businessmen hostile to the Labour government and the newly-monetarism-aligned Opposition front bench. In response to the Labour plan for MI5 transparency, Crozier advised Thatcher to do the complete opposite, and began developing plans to make the organisation 'more efficient by increasing its secrecy' – a move designed to endear the new Tory leadership to MI5 officers.[62] After Ross McWhirter was killed by the IRA in December 1975, Crozier also set-up the National Association for Freedom (NAFF).[63] NAFF was another umbrella group containing both hard-right reactionary industrialists and Tory politicians, the latter including

[55] RR, p15.
[56] Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p212.
[57] Ibid, p238.
[58] Bloom, *Thatcher' Secret War*, p69.
[59] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), p299.
[60] Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p206.
[61] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p69.
[62] Ibid, p70.
[63] John Saville. 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.

Norman Tebbit.[64] During the Tories period in opposition, powerful private sector individuals, many of them on the boards of companies which paid into the Economic League, bought into the Thatcher project and threw their considerable financial weight behind the Tory opposition and their new adherence to monetarism (as well as Thatcher's fierce anti-socialist rhetoric). Thatcher's private-sector supporters had laid much of the groundwork for a Conservative victory in 1979, complete with a new ideological mooring and set of policies developed and paid for during the period in opposition.

A central tenet of monetarism was the need to dramatically reduce the amount of money in circulation, in the hope of cutting inflation.[65] Denis Healey, the Labour Chancellor, had embraced some tenets of monetarism in the late 1970s, by cutting government spending. However, Labour's monetarist policies, and accompanying public-sector pay caps, were deeply unpopular with trade union leaders. In the winter of 1978, a wave of public sector strikes took place – weakening the Labour government and causing the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, to label the situation as the 'Winter of Discontent.' The anti-union, right-wing press seized on the phrase – and went about portraying the country as being paralysed by over-bearing, over-powerful 'union-barons' who were unwilling to enter any form of negotiation.[66] In reality, many of the strikes were about poor pay and conditions caused by the economic stagnation of the period. Between 1975 and 1980, real wages in Britain had fallen by 13 per cent – the biggest contraction since the 1930s.[67] The minority Labour government warded off the threat of NUM industrial action by agreeing to terms beneficial to the miners. With the economy struggling and the rhetoric of 'union-barons' prevalent, the monetarism-aligned Tories were able to sweep to power in the general election of 1979. However, Tory animosity with the trade union movement, and the NUM in particular, remained an unresolved issue.

[64] Ibid.
[65] Beckett, *Promised You a Miracle*, p41.
[66] Geoffrey Greig & Robert Porter 'Britain Under Siege,' *The Daily Mail Historical Archive*, 8th January 1979, http://find.galegroup.com/dmha/browseEdition.do?prodId=DMHA&userGroupName=edge&tabID=T004&method=doBrowseEdition&mcode=3FDQ&dp=19790108&docPage=browseissue&fromPage=browseIssuePage (Accessed 3rd May 2019).
[67] Tara Lopez, 'The Winter of Discontent: Myth, Memory and History,' *Twentieth Century British History* 27.1 (March 2016), pp.163-166.

Chapter 4: Polarisation and Preparation 1979-1983.

The Thatcher administration had its first run-in with the NUM in February 1981. That month, the NCB announced a plan to close 23 pits deemed uneconomic, with immediate effect. A further 50 pits were earmarked to close within the next five years, leading to tens-of-thousands of job losses. The announcement by the NCB led to a wave of strikes across the more left-wing areas of the NUM. Senior Tories felt that the NCB Chairman, Derek Ezra, had been foolish to announce the closure program.[1] None of the recommendations in the Ridley Report were in place – as Ezra's own tenancy as NCB Chairman showed. Moreover, the miners seemed united in support of the strikes, and the government was facing polls depicting large levels of unpopularity amongst the electorate.[2] Fearing that the government was not in a position to face down the strikes, the closure program was withdrawn – on orders from Thatcher herself.[3] Once again, the NUM seemed to have displayed its political clout, in doing so defeating a sitting Tory government intent on closures.

In December 1981, Scargill was elected President of the NUM with a massive majority, signalling a shift leftwards in the NUM leadership. Scargill's election was complemented by a corresponding left-wing shift at the NUM national conference, and a series of appointments of Scargill loyalists to the NUM Executive Committee.[4] The new leadership felt that the only way to combat further closure threats was to match the NCB and the government with their own uncompromising, hard-line stance. However, some longstanding members of the NUM Executive felt alienated by the Leftwards shift. Self-described Right-winger Roy Ottey argued that he and others on the Right of the Executive felt intimidated during Special Delegate Conferences. One such event, in December 1981, had been called to discuss the NCB's latest pay offer. McGahey, now Scargill's Vice-President, invited into the hall a group of lobbyists who had initially gathered outside to heckle Executive members deemed too right-wing. Ottey claimed that the lobbyists had been paid for by his political opponents.[5] Once inside the hall, the hissing continued as an accompaniment to the speeches of those in favour of accepting the NCB's offer. With the Left consolidating power at the top of the union, Scargill repeatedly claimed that the NCB were pursuing a programme of pit closures by stealth, on behalf of the Conservative government. He made the claim in October 1982, whilst addressing delegates in Stoke.[6] The threat of further industrial action was never far away.

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[1] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster 1992). p84.
[2] Ibid
[3] Ibid
[4] Ibid, p150.
[5] Roy Ottey. *The Strike: An Insider's Story* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1985), p32.
[6] Ibid, p48.

McGahey warned in 1983 that another coal strike was now inevitable.[7] John Saville, the left-wing historian who first argued the importance of the Ridley Report, supported Scargill during the strike. However, the historian did believe that Scargill's incorruptible unwillingness to negotiate was seen by some Tories as something that they could use in their favour.[8] In regard to 'stealth,' Scargill was correct.

Thatcher began to fill key roles in her administration with monetarist allies. The original leader of the Tory monetarists, Keith Joseph, became Secretary of State for Industry. Another Thatcherite, Geoffrey Howe, was made Chancellor. Between 1979 and 1981, Howe went about implementing a raft of monetarist policies collectively labelled the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In 1980, the so-called 'wets' were alarmed when Howe told one of them that, for him, monetarism was not a political ideology, but rather an incontrovertible scientific principle, 'like the law of gravitation.'[9] In 1981 Thatcher appointed the monetarists' favourite economist, Alan Walters, to the position of Chief Economics Advisor. In 1983, Ridley himself was rewarded with the post of Secretary of State for Transport. Ridley's own monetarism had not waned. Neither had he support for Thatcher. In 1985, toward the end of the strike, he upset the 'wets' by declaring that Thatcher's large electoral majorities had given her an unprecedented, unquestionable jurisdiction, meaning that only she alone should make important governmental decisions. The views of the 'wets' were deemed inconsequential to Ridley.[10] Defending monetarism in the late 1980s, Thatcher herself would echo Howe's earlier claim that for her and her ministers, monetarism was 'as essential as the law of gravity.'[11]

Thatcher's monetarist policies and public service cuts exacerbated social divisions, leading to a reduced standard of life for many amongst the working-class. Just a year into her first premiership in November 1980, she gave a speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet in which she stated that 'we now have no alternative but to accept a reduction in the standard of living, if investment and employment are to recover.'[12] That is, certain sections of society would have to suffer, for perceived longer-term economic benefits. However, it is pertinent to ask whom the Prime Minister was referring to by using the inclusive pronoun, 'we?' The living standards of Britain's wealthiest

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[7] Martin Adeney & John Lloyd. *The Miners' Strike, 1984-5: Loss Without Limit* (Oxford: Routledge 1988), p83.
[8] John Saville. 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.
[9] Gilmour, *Dancing With Dogma*, p14.
[10] Ibid, p32 & p61.
[11] Andy Beckett. *Promised You a Miracle: Why 1980-82 Made Modern Britain* (St Ives: Faber 2015), p43.
[12] Selina Todd. *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class 1910-2010* (London: John Murray 2014), p318.

individuals did not fall during the period, though those of ordinary workers certainly did.[13] Many leading trade unionists blamed Thatcher's policies for a sharp decline in membership, as they lost over two million members between 1979 and 1984.[14] By 1982, unemployment had risen to over 10%, where it would stay for the entire decade. Also that year, the Employment Act of 1982 restricted union rights, banned closed shops and made secondary picketing illegal. Scargill was defiant in the face of the new legislation. At the NUM's annual conference, he told the assembled delegates that 'we do not and will not recognise distinctions between forms of picketing.'[15] Massive job losses in traditionally heavily-unionised sectors in northern England, South Wales and Scotland were entrenching geographical, as well as class, divides. Across northern Britain, middle-aged people who had worked all of their lives were subjected to the indignities of the dole office. They were joined by another generation, as thousands of school-leavers shared a similar fate.[16] Cuts to welfare provision exacerbated economic distress yet further. Cutting back on social security would, claimed Minister for Social Security John Major, prevent people from falling into a 'benefit culture.'[17] In reality, the Tories were well aware that high unemployment was an inevitable consequence of their pursued fiscal policy of maintaining high interest rates, in the hope of protecting finance capital for the benefit of the City of London.[18] However, the protection of finance capital through interest rate manipulation conflicted with the needs of manufacturing capital.[19] Whilst the financial sector in London was rising, the north of England in particular was losing its political and economic leverage, leverage it had enjoyed since the industrial revolution a century and a half earlier.[20]

The Tories' own political entrenchment was most evident in their attitude towards the traditionally left-wing port city of Liverpool, one of the areas hardest hit by public-sector cutbacks and enduring the spectre of mass unemployment. In July 1981, Thatcher-loyalist and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Geoffrey Howe, wrote a private letter to Thatcher, suggesting that the city should be subjected to a policy of 'managed decline.'[21] July 1981 also saw the outbreak of violent confrontations on the streets of several major cities between rioting local residents and police, including in Toxteth. Many of the riots were centred in black communities, angry at what people saw as inherent racism displayed by the police, particularly the 'stop-and-search' method that was used,

[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid, p321.
[15] Ottey, *The Strike*, p42.
[16] Beckett, *Promised You a Miracle*, p58.
[17] Todd, *The People*, p326.
[18] David Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (St Ives: Oxford UP 2007), p59.
[19] Ibid, p56.
[20] Beckett, Promised You a *Miracle*, pxix.
[21] Ibid

according to some, disproportionately against ethnic minorities.[22] However, the riots can also be seen as a manifestation of discontent at lack of investment, poor housing and rising unemployment. Many working-class white people joined in the rioting, particularly in Liverpool.[23] In and around Toxteth, any buildings that were linked with the Conservative Party were vandalised or set on fire by the rioters. *Swainbank's Pawnbrokers* (run by a former Tory councillor), *Thatcher's Tea and Coffee House* (run by the local Conservative association) and *Sefton Park Conservative Club* were all attacked.[24] Rioting was also reported in several districts of both Birmingham and London, as well as across many towns and inner-cities in the north of England.[25] The attacks on the Conservative buildings can be seen as a manifestation of the blame levelled at Margaret Thatcher and the Tories by some from the poorer elements in society; many of whom saw the Prime Minister as the harbinger and cause of the extreme economic deprivation affecting parts of the country.

However, the Prime Minister also had her supporters. Thatcher's policies of low tax and financial deregulation had led to large increases in dispensable income for sections of the upper middle-classes, hence the 'yuppies' phenomenon.[26] Despite overt coverage of the yuppies in the mass media, they were not numerous enough to win any elections for the Tories. However, standing in antithesis to Thatcher's plethora of detractors, the Conservatives had created an electoral coalition well-suited to the peculiarities of the British first-past-the-post system. They were inadvertently, yet vitally, helped in this by the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) in 1981, a move which split the vote on the Left and allowed the Tories to easily endure a sharp decline in their own share of the vote between 1979 and 1983.[27] The SDP launch meant that the Tories were still able to increase their representation in Parliament, despite the decrease in vote share. Moreover, the Tories' privatisation programs were enthusiastically embraced by some sections of the working-class. Some working-class people, particularly in the south-east of England, were encouraged to buy, and did buy, shares in newly-privatised companies such as British Gas. Many of those same people became home-owners for the first time under Thatcher's right-to-buy program. Some better-off working-class people not only become home owners for the first time under Thatcher, but also felt that they had increased their social status and gained a real stake in society, through their shares in the privatised companies. These policies greatly endeared Thatcher to those

[22] Todd, *the People*, p320.
[23] Ibid, p321.
[24] Beckett, *Miracle*, p68.
[25] Ibid, p73.
[26] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p10.
[27] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), p300.

who benefited from them. Even for those who did not benefit from privatisation, many working-class voters approved of Thatcher's perceived hard-line stance on issues such as race and crime.[28]

Thatcher's personal popularity, amongst some, meant that even policies which would make working-class people economically worse-off would often be supported – put down to 'common sense,' Thatcher's oft-repeated phrase. Though policies might have negative consequences for many people, or even most people, they were accepted as an inevitable consequence of economic realism. In 1983, with unemployment at its highest level for over half-a-century, a survey amongst unemployed people found that 24% of the jobless fully intended to vote Conservative at the next election.[29] That figure can only be attributed to Thatcher's personal popularity. The new home-owning, shares-investing beneficiaries of Thatcherism were also committed supporters, matching the partisanship of Thatcher's fierce detractors in their unwavering support for the Prime Minister. The British comedian, Labour supporter and keen football fan, Harry Enfield, would parody these better-off, southern working-class people with his character *Loadsamoney*.[30] Enfield had been inspired to create the character after seeing Tottenham Hotspur supporters outside his north London flat, waving £10 notes at supporters of clubs from the unemployment-stricken north.[31]

Well aware of the polarised opinions within society, the Prime Minister often used the right-wing press to illicit surges of patriotic fervour and to quell discontent. In April 1982, Thatcher was given a golden opportunity when Argentinian President Leopoldo Galtieri invaded the Falkland Islands. Because of the conflict, the House of Commons, media and indeed many voters got a taste of military aggression in pursuit of liberal-sounding causes such as the right to self-determination and the need to remove dictators.[32] The Falklands War was the only event which saw Ridley in disagreement with Thatcher. In the run-up to the Argentine invasion, Ridley had visited the islands. On his return, he suggested to the Prime Minister that the islands be 'leased back' to the Argentines, as they had no real economic value to Britain. Thatcher's response to Ridley was described as 'thermonuclear.'[33] The Falklands episode helped to consolidate Thatcher's power within the Conservative Party itself. Norman Fowler, who served in a number of different Cabinet positions under Thatcher, wrote a newspaper article in 2013 in which he claimed that prior to the Falklands War, Tory Cabinet meetings were often riven with dissent. According to Fowler, the one-nation conservative detractors of hard-monetarism criticized Thatcher's cuts and sweeping privatisation

[28] Ibid, p296.
[29] Ibid, p300.
[30] See 'Harry Enfield Loadsamoney,' *Youtube*, uploaded 14th June 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtnmEBiLqx8
[31] Andy McSmith. *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable 2011), p188.
[32] Beckett, Promised You a *Miracle*, p.xxii.
[33] Gilmour, *Dancing With Dogma*, p243.

programs. Derided by Thatcherites as the so-called 'wets,' these included the Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine, the Minister for Arts Norman St John-Stevas and the Lord Privy Seal and long-standing Thatcher critic, Ian Gilmour.[34] All argued that the Prime Minister's monetarist policies were hurting the poorest in society. Fowler claimed that he was an outspoken 'wet' himself. In a show of her trademark low tolerance for dissent, however, Thatcher replaced Fowler as Secretary of State for Transport in October 1983. The new incumbent would be Nicholas Ridley. That would certainly have been seen as a promotion for Ridley, who had been serving as a mid-level Treasury secretary beforehand. Fowler was moved to the relatively minor position of Secretary of State for Social Services. Despite widespread hostility from many political opponents inside and outside the Party, in June 1983 the Tories won a second general election, and Thatcher's first landslide victory. With her aims and methods justified by the result, argues Fowler, internal dissenters were silenced. The removal from the Cabinet of some who questioned the Prime Minister's decision-making, may also have contributed to the decision of those who remained to be more careful with any criticism, eliciting the beginning of a culture of conformity within the Cabinet. After the 1983 election, Thatcher and her loyalists could go about their duties safe in the knowledge that the election result had consolidated the Tory front bench behind them.

Despite now operating under a government much more in line with its own political stance, the Economic League faced a decline in the early 1980s. A downturn in the labour market and a recession in construction led to a sharp downturn in requests for information.[35] In turn, subscriptions also began to slide. In August 1983, 13 workers were sacked by British Leyland, including the union leader Derek 'Red Robbo' Robertson (see case study 2 for full details). MI5 had identified Robertson and his co-workers as 'subversives' because they had met with Communist Party members. MI5 anonymously passed the details on to company bosses. The affair was seen as a failure by the once-powerful League. None of the thirteen were on the Midlands blacklist. The League had not only failed to prevent their employment but had no idea of their 'subversive' links until the story was in the press. In 1972, the SHC had turned to the League because their blacklisting techniques were more advanced than the state's and because they had actually-existing blacklists. By 1983, that was not the case. MI5 and senior civil servants - engaged in counter-subversion against political opponents of the governing Conservative Party - no longer required the services of the League. Mike Hughes attempted to explain why. Under Thatcher, 'the League was finding itself increasingly marginalised as the government transformed key sections of the civil service into a

[34] Norman Fowler, 'Margaret Thatcher's Cabinet was a battle of wills,' *The Telegraph* (12th April 2013), http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/margaret-thatcher/8521277/Margaret-Thatchers-Cabinet-was-a-battle-of-wills.html

[35] Mike Hughes. *Spies at Work: The Definitive History of the Economic League* (London: Lulu 2012), p266.

powerful radical-right-wing propaganda machine.'[36] There was, however, another reason why the government did not have to approach the League. In 1972, Heath had drafted Victor Rothschild directly into the state apparatus. From early on in her own tenure, Thatcher had rolled that tactic out to include loyalists from longstanding private-sector allies including NM Rothschild, Shell and BP

From 1972 onwards, Prime Minister Edward Heath sanctioned state-sponsored counter-subversion against political opponents of the governing Conservative Party. Senior civil servants and MI5 officers collaborated to form the Subversion Home Committee (SHC) and its sub-groups. The SHC weaponised sections of the state against trade unionists and political opponents of the governing party via an extensive blacklisting exercise and by smearing some of those opponents via the sympathetic 'editor.' Heath's 'premature Thatcherism' represented a disintegration of distinctions between the governing Conservative Party and elements of the permanent state. It would also serve as a framework in the 1980s when a more radical Conservative administration pressurised a similarly politically-aligned state to engage in comparable activity – though on a much larger scale.[37] An important detail concerning the SHC was that the small and secretive group was not large enough, nor did it have the manpower or capabilities, even with the help of MI5, to carry-out counter-subversion - without help from the Economic League. That would not be the case after 1983. The involvement of the League revealed the closeness between the Conservative Party and elements of the politically-aligned private-sector. The Tories' links with executives representing League-financing companies – including NM Rothschild, Shell, and BP, were cemented during the Conservatives' period in opposition, particularly through groups such as the Centre for Policy Studies. The Tories new ideological adherence to monetarism, the Party's more extreme leader, and that leader's espoused disdain for socialism, attracted the support – financially and with policy ideas – of many private-sector loyalists. Thatcher's first term in office led to societal polarisation in several ways - politically, socially and geographically. Moreover, the Tories' ongoing animosity with the NUM continued to worsen. Ridley and the ERG had provided a detailed stratagem which suggested attacking the coal industry while adhering to stealth. In order to implement the Ridley Report, Thatcher recruited some of her private-sector loyalists directly into the state apparatus.

Reflections on the Research Questions

The new evidence used in this section was compiled before the advent of Thatcher and Thatcherism. However, the new data used here indicates pre-existing, conservative-aligned,

[36] Ibid, p267.
[37] Phil Scraton & Phil Thomas. *The State v the People: Lessons from the Coal Dispute* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1985), p251.

ideological mores within the state. These chapters reveal the politicisation of sections of the state apparatus during the Heath tenure – carried out on the Prime Minister's own direct orders. Chapter 3 revealed the those within the Conservatives' new monetarist leadership blurring the lines with their private-sector supporters while the party was in opposition. Several, such as Victor Rothschild, had already been recruited into the state. The new data backs up Miliband's claim concerning longstanding conservative state-biases. The data relating to the Thatcher era specifically, explored in the coming chapters, will look at any changes specific to that particular tenure. Before that could take place, it was vital to gain a full comprehension of the existing relationship between the Conservative Party and some sections of the permanent state.

Although the evidence used in this section is too early to be used in any discussion on authoritarian populism, it does back-up Scraton's claims about the Heath government. Rather than soft-corporatism, the new evidence shows the Heath-led state as authoritarian and coercive – proto-Thatcherism indeed. The next section reveals that, after her first election landslide and second victory, Thatcher began to recruit private-sector loyalists not only into the state but directly into Number 10. These loyalists would play a crucial role in the state's running of the 1984/85 miners' strike.

Part 2: The Downing Street Policy Unit

Introduction

In 1983, Margaret Thatcher populated the Downing Street Policy Unit (DSPU) with private-sector loyalists seconded from companies with longstanding affiliation with the Conservative Party. Some of those seconded into the DSPU – from Britain's two oil majors, the nuclear fuel industry and a City merchant bank - had economic interest in running-down British coal. The DSPU prepared for the coming strike by carrying-out aspects of the Ridley Report - such as the accumulation of coal stocks and the upgrading of electricity power stations to run on oil, rather than coal. From March 1984, once the strike had begun, the DSPU was instrumental in all aspects of it. Taking advantage of Britain's militarised and apparently Thatcher-aligned police force which had carried-out mass arrests, the DSPU advised Thatcher to disregard constitutional boundaries and lean on a compliant judiciary to pass down particularly harsh, exemplary sentences to striking miners. The DSPU also designed policy around the two most dangerous occurrences in which the government feared it might lose the strike – Orgreave in June and the NACODS Dispute in September. The DSPU was also involved in designing financial policy and enlisted the Foreign Office and other departments to sequester NUM funds which, alongside the Tories' legislative assault against striking miners, created a financial pincer movement and defeated the miners by dire need. Throughout the strike, the DSPU adhered to the Ridley Report's key instruction – that a stealth approach be applied and that the government should publicly avoid a full-on confrontation. By doing so, Thatcher's private-sector loyalists were able to weaponise sections of the British state against the miners while pretending that the government had nothing to do with it.

Chapter 5: The 'Unique Opportunity': The DSPU in the Early Months of the Strike

The Downing Street Policy Unit (DSPU) was a relatively new department, having only been set up for the first time under Harold Wilson in 1974. Wilson had populated the DSPU with the sort of people he trusted and felt comfortable with - Labour-supporting academics. The Labour Prime Minister's head of the DSPU – the Policy Director - was Bernard Donoghue, a left-wing, working-class academic who had gone to Oxford. During the mid-1970s, Donoghue had complained, like Wilson, of MI5 spying. After 1979, the new Prime Minister had no intention of populating the DSPU with academics. Thatcher's tenure as Education Minister under Heath had been an unhappy one - best remembered by the public for the derision she had suffered after the decision to remove free milk from British schoolchildren.[1] Thatcher remained hostile toward the entire education sector and accused lecturers and schoolteachers alike of using their positions to 'teach socialism' to students and children.[2] When it came to permanent members of the state such as departmental secretaries, Thatcher was known to prefer hand-picked civil servants and aides, and would often show hostility toward those outside of that circle.[3] As such, the DSPU might well have appealed to her – a department that was designed to be filled only by those hand-picked by herself. While Labour had chosen politically-aligned academics, after the Tories' 1979 election victory Thatcher populated the DSPU with the sort of people who she was most comfortable with - private-sector loyalists from companies politically-aligned to the Conservatives. The new Prime Minister substantially increased the staff of the department, and appointed a new Policy Director, her former special advisor, John Hoskyns. Hoskyns was an ex-army officer, computer tycoon and strident anti-trade unionist.[4] He was also a member of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), the Thatcher-aligned think-tank. Hoskyns had produced reports for the CPS since 1977 which were fiercely critical of trade unionism, including the influential 'Stepping Stones' Report which argued that trade unionism led to increased unemployment.[5] Thatcher accredited the CPS, and Hoskyns in particular, with formulating Conservative strategy since the Tory opposition years.[6] Hoskyns was particularly critical of the NUM. He argued that Tory climb-downs, such as Heath's in both 1972 and 1974, were counterproductive 'capitulations,' or adherence to the 'Macmillan Doctrine' - a reference to a previous Tory Prime Minister's perceived reluctance to

[1] Graham Goodlad. *Thatcher* (Oxon: Routledge 2016), p35.
[2] Simon Jenkins. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane 2007), pp.117-121.
[3] See Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p117, and Nigel Lawson. *The View From Number 11* (London: Bantam Press 1993), p1001.
[4] Andy Beckett. *Promised You a Miracle: Why 1980-82 Made Modern Britain (St Ives: Faber 2015),* p.xvi of preface.
[5] John Hoskyns and Norman Strauss, 'Stepping Stones,' *Centre for Policy Studies Online*, 14th November 1977, https://www.cps.org.uk/research/stepping-stones/ (Accessed 10th May 2019).
[6] Margaret Thatcher. *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins 1993), p30.

take on the NUM.[7] In order for a Tory government to stand up to the NUM, Hoskyns argued, Britain's police would have to become more militaristic and would then need to be deployed to picket-lines during a strike - a suggestion also made in the confidential annex of the Ridley Report.[8] Under Hoskyns' leadership, the DSPU constantly fired out memos and policy papers which were blunter and more provocative than the usual Whitehall advice.[9] In the wake of the Toxteth riots in 1981, he had issued a paper describing the city of Liverpool as a 'dying sub-economy.'[10] Because the DSPU leader was neither an elected member of Parliament nor a Whitehall official, he was free to pursue ideological bents unhindered.[11]

In 1982 another prominent army officer, Frank Kitson, was promoted by Thatcher to the position of Major General and Commander-in-Chief of the United Kingdom Land Forces.[12] Kitson was a highly-regarded strategist, who had been responsible for deciding army policy in Northern Ireland during the troubles. He had written a book in 1971 entitled *Low Intensity Operations* concerning psychological warfare and counterinsurgency techniques. In it, Kitson argued that the British Army's main operations in the coming decades would be 'within the [mainland] United Kingdom' and against 'political extremists.'[13] Kitson argued that a drop in living standards might cause those who had previously protested against a wide variety of causes to unite, requiring the army to step in to 'restore the position rapidly.'[14] Kitson warned against the underestimation of 'subversives' and argued that steps had to be taken to prepare for such a conflict, something that would be of vital importance to 'those whose business it is to protect the existing order.'[15] According to Hoskyns and Kitson, trade union militancy, violence and intimidation demanded a change in the relationship between central government and Britain's police force, with more militaristic techniques transferred from Northern Ireland, and gleaned from decades of suppression in the colonies, needed to transform the police into a force fit to fight the 'subversives.' Hoskyns retired as Policy Director in 1982 and was replaced by *the Times* journalist Ferdinand Mount. Thatcher continued to value the DSPU and credited Mount with writing the Conservative manifesto for the Tories' second election

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[7] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), p157.
[8] Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group 1978 (the Ridley Report), *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795 Confidential Annex, p25. All further references as 'RR.'
[9] Beckett, *Promised You a Miracle*, p78.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid, p79.
[12] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90 (Stroud: The History Press 2015),* p44.
[13] Frank Kitson. *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping* (London: Faber and Faber 1971), p24.
[14] Ibid, p25
[15] Ibid, p18.

victory, and first landslide, in 1983. Buoyed by a large Commons majority but with the threat of a miners' strike ever-present, the Prime Minister decided on a new line up for the DSPU after the election. The new Policy Director, replacing Mount, was John Redwood.

Redwood was a young, anti-trade-union, monetarist radical employed by the Economic League-donator, NM Rothschild. Victor Rothschild had seconded Redwood to the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), in the early 80s where he had based much of his work on coming up with solutions as to how the Tories might achieve 'irreversibility.' That is, fast-paced, sweeping privatisation that would prove irreversible by a future Labour government.[16] Here was another Policy Director whose sentiments echoed the Ridley Report, which had called for the engineering of a battle with the trade unions which would cause 'irreversible' damage regardless of future election results.[17] With another miners' strike increasingly likely, Redwood was seconded to the DSPU for a five-year period until 1988. Two other companies who had longstanding ties to Thatcher, and were also Economic League donators, were the oil giants, BP and Shell. Like NM Rothschild, both seconded an executive into the DSPU to prepare for the strike. David Pascall was BP's representative while John Wybrew was Shell's. Through Pascall and Wybrew, BP and Shell would have a direct, influencing hand in the upcoming miners' strike, despite claiming salaries from companies in a rival part of the energy sector.

BP and Shell, their Middle-Eastern oil empires, and their UK tax payments had been regarded by successive British governments, since at least as early as the Second World War, as vitally important to the country's economic interest. In late 1970, the companies had once again proved their value to the Exchequer after the discovery of North Sea Oil. By the end of 1970, BP had announced the discovery of the Forties Field, a huge reservoir in British waters off the coast of northern Scotland. A plethora of further oil-strikes followed, including, in 1971, Shell and Exxon's discovery of the massive Brent Field. Those discoveries became even more valuable to Britain in 1973, after the Middle-Eastern, oil-supplying, OPEC countries proclaimed a worldwide oil embargo, in response to the United States' support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War. By the mid-seventies, the minority Labour government had set up a new state-owned oil company, the British National Oil Corporation (BNOC) in order to oversee and maximise profits for British North-Sea crudes, under the stewardship of the Secretary of State for Energy and veteran Labour left-winger, Tony Benn. However, Benn's attempts at nationalisation were thwarted after the multinationals threatened to hold back their North-Sea operations. Both BP and Shell, as well as the American oil companies, had decades of Middle Eastern experience in out-negotiating indigenous calls for oil nationalisation. As such, BNOC ended up with a watered-down deal which established the impression of government

[16] Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p299.
[17] RR, p17.

control, but nothing more.[18] For the incoming Thatcher government in 1979, the hostility of Big Oil towards any form of nationalisation made the companies fine exemplars of the new, ideological direction favoured by the Prime Minister. As Economic League donators, Big Oil operated strict anti-union procedures aboard their off-shore rigs. American senior management had sacked whole crews if they believed that union organisation was being considered. Shell's Personnel Director in 1978, Peter Linklater, argued that this stance was justified, as 'the last thing we would want is to have political subversives on our payroll.'[19] The oil companies would give potential employees a political screening during the interview process. As Linklater explained, 'we are interested in identifying overt opponents of the system.'[20]

As early as 1971, oil had replaced coal as the leading fuel consumed in Britain.[21] By 1983, North Sea Oil was producing more barrels-per-day than the traditional oil-producing trio of Algeria, Libya and Nigeria combined. In response to an early 80s successful privatisation of its Nigerian assets (done in response to North Sea competition), BP underwent a complete change in corporate culture. The company, which had previously been majority-owned by the British State went about implementing competition-based individualism within its different sectors, in the hope of becoming more 'entrepreneurial.'[22] The company became dominated by traders and commercial people, who replaced the old-guard of supply-planner diplomats.[23] Pascall and Wybrew, recruited into the DSPU, represented not only the biggest economic rival to coal, but also the anti-nationalisation, anti-union ideology professed by Thatcher and her loyalists. The Ridley Report had stated the importance of converting power stations from coal-burn to oil-burn, in the hope of undermining the NUM.[24] Despite an overt conflict of interest, the two oil men were now a part of the state apparatus which would be influential in the day-to-day running of the strike.

The early 1980s had also seen nuclear power make a rapid entry into electricity generation. The fourth member of the DSPU was Peter Warry. Warry was the chief-executive of *British Energy*, which operated Britain's eight nuclear power stations. He was also seconded from 1983 onwards. While Redwood took the job title of Policy Advisor, the other three were given the official title of 'Special Advisor.' Redwood, Pascall, Wybrew and Warry, representing the City Banks (NM Rothschild), BP, Shell and British (Nuclear) Energy respectively, would determine policy for the government for the duration of the coal strike.

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[18] Andy Beckett. *When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber 2009), p200.
[19] Ibid, p207.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid 61.
[22] Daniel Yergin. *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster 1991), p722.
[23] Ibid
[24] RR, Confidential Annex, p25.

The Ridley Report had made another specific recommendation with regards to coal. In order to prepare for the engineered strike, the government should set out to achieve the maximum quantity of coal stocks possible. Between 1980 and 1983, coal stocks had indeed risen to their highest recorded levels. The NCB Director General of Industrial Relations, Ned Smith, dismissed claims that stocks had become high as a means of preparation, at least as far as the NCB were concerned. Smith pointed out that stocks of coal began to accumulate in the early 1980s because of a recession-induced poor market for coal, culminating in a reduced demand for energy between 1980 and 1983. Smith was not aware of the existence of the Ridley Report, however, until after the strike had ended.[25] Moreover, he could not explain, nor would he have been aware of, the DSPU's clear fascination with coal stocks from 1983 onwards. A series of periodical DSPU reports on coal stocks culminated in a report issued to Thatcher just days after the beginning of the strike. The report, entitled 'endurance levels of coal,' revealed that 'measures had already been undertaken to increase power station coal stocks.'[26] Whatever these 'measures' were, it seems unlikely that the DSPU were talking about naturally-occurring economic cycles inherent within the coal industry. Thatcher underlined a section highlighting that, in fact, 'coal stocks at power stations are at record levels.'[27] Six months before the strike, in September 1983, the NUM and the NCB had begun what were supposed to be routine wage negotiations. A report from the Cabinet Office argued that sensitivity would be a key issue in the upcoming negotiations, and offered a generally positive outlook on achieving a settlement. After reading the report, Thatcher dismissed it with a single word, crossing out Cabinet Undersecretary Peter Gregson's suggestion of sensitivity, and writing 'NO' over the top of it.[28]

As another means of preparation, the Report had suggested that the government should begin to 'recruit chairmen sympathetic to our objectives.'[29] Thatcher had personally selected Walter Marshall and Ian MacGregor to run the CEGB (Electricity) and NCB (Coal) monopolies respectively.[30] Both were huge advocates of nuclear power, running down the coal industry and privatisation.[31] MacGregor had gained notoriety in the United States as a hard-right, reactionary strike-breaker who had initially been appointed by Thatcher as Chairman of British Steel – quickly becoming a public hate figure amongst many British steelworkers.[32] MacGregor commanded the same animosity from

[25] Ned Smith. *The 1984 Miners' Strike: The Actual Account* (Whitstable: Oyster Press 1997), p13.
[26] DSPU to Thatcher, 9th March 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Peter Gregson to Thatcher, September 1983, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1330.
[29] RR. p14.
[30] John Saville, 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.
[31] Ibid
[32] Ibid

the miners. Scargill branded him the 'American butcher of British industry.'[33] Even right-wing members of the NUM Executive, such as Roy Ottey, thought that the appointment of MacGregor was provocative.[34] Tory 'wets' agreed. Ian Gilmour, now relegated to the backbenches, later claimed that the position of the so-called 'moderates' within the NUM had been destroyed by the appointment of MacGregor.[35] NCB executive Ned Smith criticised Scargill and the NUM Left for their overly-negative portrayals of MacGregor. As the Director General of Industrial Relations, however, Smith admitted that even he reacted to the news of MacGregor's appointment with great dismay.[36] In September 1983, shortly after MacGregor's appointment, Scargill again made the claim that the Tory government was 'operating a pit closure programme by stealth,' and that MacGregor was a part of that plan.[37] Although he could not have known for certain at the time, Scargill was again correct, in that both the need to use stealth, and the recruitment of ideologically-aligned chairmen were central instructions in the Ridley Report. In early February 1984, during a trip to a Northumbria colliery, the 70-year old American was jostled and knocked to the floor, sustaining bruising to his head and neck. At a Cabinet meeting, several Tory ministers seemed more interested in exploiting the media coverage of the incident, rather than MacGregor's health.[38] Nevertheless, the incident showed the levels of animosity that existed between a section of the miners and the new NCB chief. Despite that animosity, the Ridley Report's suggestion of recruiting politically-aligned chairmen had been followed.

On 6th March 1984, MacGregor announced that 20 pits were to be closed outright, with the loss of twenty-thousand jobs across the country. Scargill claimed to have seen secret evidence that put the hit-list figure closer to 70 pit closures. Prime Minister's Papers released in 2014 confirmed Scargill's figure as correct.[39] A mass walk-out at the Cortonwood Pit in Yorkshire, one of those named on the list, followed. The NUM President may well have taken that personally. Cortonwood was just down the road from where Scargill lived. The leaders of the Yorkshire Area of the NUM announced a strike across their area, in resistance to the closure threat. At the same time, strike action was taking place in Scotland, over the proposed closure of the Polmaise Colliery. However, not all pits in either the Yorkshire Area or the Scottish Area joined the strike, which had not been officially sanctioned by the NUM Executive. Although Scargill and McGahey wanted a national strike they were reluctant to call a national vote amongst NUM members to determine it. In accordance

[33] Obituary to Ian MacGregor, *BBC News Online*, 14th April 1998, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/78042.stm
[34] Roy Ottey. *The Strike: An Insider's Story* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson 1985), p51.
[35] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster 1992), p87.
[36] Smith, *The Actual Account*, p16.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, 26th February 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/78.
[39] Minutes of Meeting 15th September 1983, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.

with his repeated claim that the NCB and government were attempting to close swathes of the coal industry by stealth, Scargill had attempted to win national ballots for strike action in both 1982 and 1983 and was voted down on both occasions.[40] As such, he, McGahey and other NUM Executive left-wingers were reluctant to call another ballot which they feared they might lose. At a meeting of the Executive on the 8th of March 1984, called to discuss Cortonwood and Polmaise, several right-wingers on the Executive pushed for a national ballot on strike action, convinced that it would be rejected by the NUM rank-and-file.[41] However, a rival motion was put forward by the South Wales Area President and Scargill ally, Emlyn Williams. That is, the Executive should give official sanction to the ongoing strikes in Scotland and South Yorkshire. Ottey, the right-winger, saw that as both undemocratic, and as a backhanded way to begin a national strike without holding a ballot.[42] Once Scotland and South Yorkshire were out, flying pickets could be deployed to spread the strike not only across those regions, but nationwide. The flying pickets could travel en-masse to non-striking pits in non-striking areas and converge around the pit entrances, in the hope of either persuading or intimidating working miners to join the strike in solidarity. As discussed, those tactics had given Scargill a satisfying victory over the Tories at Saltley in 1972. As the meeting closed, the Executive members voted outright to either hold a ballot, as favoured by the right, or officially endorse the Scottish and Yorkshire Area strikes, as favoured by the left. With the left now in the ascendency on the Executive, the latter vote won by 21 votes to 3.[43] With the Scottish and Yorkshire Areas endorsed, the miners' strike had begun.

The Ridley Report had called on the next Tory government to provoke one of Britain's strongest unions into a battle. It had named the coal industry as the best target. It had stated that a threat to jobs was the best way to go about it. MacGregor's closure plan can be seen as a move to fulfil all of those requirements, delivered by an ideologically aligned chairman - another move suggested by Ridley in 1978. Later, on the same day as the NUM Executive meeting had taken place, a Cabinet meeting was held at Downing Street. While Scargill seemed to know about the 'closure by stealth' plan, government ministers seemed to be aware of the NUM Executive's discussions and decisions from earlier that day. Thatcher and her ministers were aware that Scargill and the NUM leadership would not call a national ballot for strike action. The Minister for Energy, Alick Buchanan-Smith, told Thatcher so at the meeting. The Prime Minister gave a vote of confidence to Ian MacGregor, replying that 'the chairman of the NCB should be allowed to handle the matter as he thought best.' Thatcher was also well aware that without a legitimising ballot, the striking miners

[40] Andy McSmith. *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable 2011), p156.
[41] Ottey, *The Strike*, p69.
[42] Ibid, p61.
[43] Ibid, p69.

would deploy pickets. As such, she assured attending ministers that measures had already been taken to alert Chief Constables to 'the possibility of violence from flying pickets.'[44]

The reason for engineering a coal strike, according to the Ridley Report, was to inflict a defeat on the trade unions and achieve 'irreversibility.' Just a few weeks into the miners' strike, in March 1984, BP's David Pascall advised Thatcher that the DSPU, who had continued to monitor coal stocks, felt that the time was right for a 'unique opportunity to break the power of the militants in the NUM.'[45] The BP Executive cautioned that if such a 'great opportunity' was passed up, industrial relations would continue to be dominated by, as he saw it, the ideologies of the left.[46] Redwood agreed. In August, he advised Thatcher that, as far as the DSPU were concerned, 'it is clear that we are in a political rather than an industrial strike.'[47] Thatcher agreed with that sentiment.[48] However, both Redwood and Pascall were keen to abide with the adherence to stealth, which was one of the main tenets of the Ridley Report. As such, they were critical of some Thatcher loyalists from within the permanent state whose behaviour threatened to bring about difficult questions about state neutrality – particularly policemen. A report in June from the Home Office outlined how pickets arrested in Mansfield had been asked 'political questions' by Thatcher-aligned police officers.[49] The arrested miners had been asked if they voted for Scargill, and whether they belonged to any political organisation. They were asked about how they would vote in a general election, if the only two options were Conservative or Communist.[50] The DSPU advised that senior officers be dissuaded from overt shows of political partisanship.

The peculiarities of the coal industry meant that, during a miners' strike, it took a long time, several months, before the strike would affect electricity-generation supplies. That gap was one of the reasons why the Ridley Report had targeted coal. It was also the reason why Scargill had picketed Saltley Gate in 1972, as the then-Yorkshire Branch official knew that shutting-down a coking plant would speed up the process and bring pressure onto the government to make a deal much sooner. At the start of the 1984/85 strike, the DSPU confidently estimated that it would be a minimum of 26 weeks before the miners' strike would have any effect on the British economy. However, Pascall suggested the implementation of a further precaution. The Ridley Report had suggested that electricity power stations be run on oil, rather than coal. On the 30th March, Pascall told the Prime Minister that the Department of Energy was now pursuing a policy of maximum oil

[44] Minutes from Cabinet meeting, 8th March 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/78.
[45] Pascall to Thatcher, Coal Report, 30th March 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.
[46] Ibid
[47] John Redwood to Thatcher, Report, 14th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[48] Thatcher, *the Downing Street Years*, p377.
[49] Home Office Report to Thatcher, June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[50] Ibid

burn at power stations, at the expense of coal, in the hope that this would increase endurance even further.[51] Ignoring the BP executive's clear conflict of interests, Thatcher underlined her agreement. Two weeks later, in mid-April, the Energy Secretary Peter Walker announced that Pascall's plan had been implemented, and that maximum 'oil burn [was] working well.'[52] Pascall was not alone in promoting his other field of work. Once the strike was underway, nuclear power chief Warry suggested the building of a raft of new nuclear power stations.[53] Shell's Wybrew also favoured the oil option - dismissing the calls from some ministers for large purchases of imported coal and insisting that 'imported coal [was] unlikely to be cheaper' than increased oil usage.[54] The private-sector loyalists inside the DSPU had, just a month into the strike, made use of their backgrounds to implement another element of Ridley's report.

At the outset of the strike, Thatcher had set up a regular meeting group, to be attended by cabinet members, to discuss the ongoing strike. Chaired by Thatcher herself, the meetings were officially entitled 'the Ministerial Group on Coal.' Ministers referred to the meeting group by the shorter title of 'MISC101.' Regular attenders at MISC101 meetings were Thatcher loyalists such as the Home Secretary Leon Brittan and the new Secretary of State for Transport, Nicholas Ridley. One MISC101 meeting took place in late April, four weeks after the DSPU's suggestion of power station conversion to maximum oil burn. Thatcher voiced her own satisfaction that this directive was being met.[55] Ridley assured the Prime Minister that the recruitment of non-union haulage firms had been a success, and that 'virtually all coal [was] being delivered.'[56] Ridley had been able to carry-out that particular aspect of his own report via his position as Transport Secretary.

Although they were officially part of the state through their secondments, the DSPU members were loyal only to the Prime Minister and, safe in the secretive nature of their work, appeared to be unconcerned with any pretentions of state impartiality. As such, they were free to engage in openly-partisan language concerning Thatcher's political opponents. In June, the day after the Battle of Orgreave, Pascall referred to the striking miners as 'Scargill's shock troops.'[57] Redwood was scathing about what he saw as a socialist challenge to Tory power, decrying the 'extreme left, mounting a major extra-parliamentary challenge to the government.'[58] Full of Cold War bravado,

[51] David Pascall to Thatcher, Coal Report, 30th March 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.
[52] Peter Walker, Cabinet Meeting, 12th April 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/78.
[53] Peter Warry to Thatcher, 20th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[54] John Wybrew to Thatcher, 21st November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[55] Margaret Thatcher cited in Minutes of Meeting of MISC101 Group, 27th April 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB130/1268.
[56] Nicholas Ridley cited in Minutes of Meeting of MISC101 Group, 27th April 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB130/1268.
[57] Pascall to Thatcher, 19th June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[58] Redwood, to Thatcher, 13th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.

Redwood railed against 'revolutionary strategies,' used by dockers and miners alike.[59] He also used dehumanising language, telling Thatcher in July that strike-supporting workers in other sectors, such as those in local government offices, might be a 'breeding ground' for left-wing activity.[60] Redwood also took action, issuing a policy for the government to adopt a tougher stance toward 'political' enemies. He suggested closing pits in militant areas as a punishment, regardless of economic viability – as long as the government's real motives were not made public. By doing so, reflected the Policy Director, the government could 'gain something from this long dispute.'[61]

As well as her private-sector loyalists drafted into the state via the DSPU, Thatcher continued to enjoy the support of private-sector chairmen and executives still outside of the apparatus of the state – but keen to get involved. John Plessey was the Chief Executive of *Plessey Inc*, a major British arms trader and Economic League donator.[62] Plessey wrote to the Prime Minister in July to give his full support. He claimed that, among most private-sector company executives like himself, loyalty to Thatcher was unwavering and that 'the basic issue of the miners' strike – namely the fundamental conflict between capitalism and collectivism [was] now well understood.'[63] Thatcher also received a message of support from her counterpart across the Atlantic. Ronald Reagan wrote to send 'considerable empathy' to his opposite number in Britain.[64] Thatcher wrote back, seemingly eager to convince the President that 'the ports are open again, and a substantial portion of the [coal] industry is back at work.'[65] Despite the DSPU's own preference for politically-charged language, the members were quick to label any public figure who spoke out against government strategy as a leftist ideologue who could easily be dismissed. The Bishop of Durham was secretly lambasted for criticising government policy. He had written to the Prime Minister, seeking to highlight the plight of suffering miners' families. The DSPU derided him as a 'minor folk-hero of the left.'[66] They advised that the bishop be ignored.

In private, Redwood had stated that the strike was political. In order to maintain adherence to the stealth instruction, however, all efforts had to be made in public to argue that the strike was economic, and that the pit closure program was being undertaken purely as a response to sound financial advice. Pascall wrote to Thatcher in May to suggest that it be publicly asserted in the press that Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire were the only two areas that had not become an economic

[59] Ibid
[60] Ibid
[61] Redwood to Thatcher, 1st August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[62] Mike Hughes. *Spies at Work: The Definitive History of the Economic League* (London: Lulu 2012), p329.
[63] Plessey to Thatcher, 22nd July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[64] Ronald Reagan letter to Thatcher, 15th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[65] Thatcher, letter to Ronald Reagan, 18th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[66] DSPU report, 3rd October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1334.

liability.[67] No evidence was offered to support that assertion, though the BP executive would have been aware of the benefits of publicly backing the two areas where the strike was at its weakest. The government's public claim to be acting solely on economic principle was undermined by the fact that a string of Britain's leading economists lined-up to dispute that claim. An independent, impartial report by *London Weekend Television* was commissioned in September 1984. The report was compiled by, among others, Gavyn Davies, the chief UK economist and David Metcalf, Professor of Economics at Kent University. The report found that the government had 'failed to address the social costs which were inherent in the straightforward closure option.'[68] In December, the *Journal of Accountancy* published a critique of the accounting methods of the NCB. Five academic accounting specialists, including professors in the field from the University of Sheffield and UMIST, agreed that the coal industry appeared to be operationally viable.[69] Other economists, such as Emile Woolf, accused the NCB of having accounting books which were 'a supreme masterpiece in the art of obfuscation.'[70] That is, the NCB had laid a 'maze of artfully presented decoys,' designed to make it look as if a profitable industry was losing money.[71] In private, Thatcher herself acknowledged that some pit closures were not entirely due to economic consideration. In a cabinet meeting in December, the Prime Minister spoke of the importance of closing pits even when it was not practical or cost-effective to do so. This had to be done to 'preserve the principal.'[72] Rather than saving money, the closure program and the ensuing strike was costing millions. In May, the Treasury estimated the cost of the strike at £3 million per-week.[73] In August, after Orgreave, the figure had risen to £25 million per-week.[74] A huge chunk of that was spent on providing busses and organising police protection for working miners. At each striking pit, the police were spending large amounts of money to get a small number of working miners past the flying pickets. Despite the costs, they continued that expensive practice, believing it to be worth every penny as a propagandistic

[67] Pascall to Thatcher, 11th May 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1330.
[68] *London Weekend Television* report on economic viability of mining industry, copy found in Prime Minister's files, 23rd September 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1334.
[69] Saville, 'An Open Conspiracy', pp.295-329.
[70] Ibid
[71] Ibid
[72] Thatcher, minutes of a meeting of Cabinet Office, at number 10, 13th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[73] Letter from Treasury to Thatcher, 8th May 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1330.
[74] Policy Unit to Thatcher, August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.

gesture.[75] The DSPU response to spiralling costs was to remind the Prime Minister that financial losses in the short-term were much preferable to political-losses in the long-term.[76]

[75] David Waddington. 'Authorative Institutions,' in David Waddington, Maggie Wykes, & Chas Critcher (eds.) *Split at the Seams? Community Continuity and Change After the 1984-5 Coal Dispute* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p145.
[76] DSPU Report to Thatcher, August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.

Chapter 6: 'A Word to the Wise': The DSPU, the Police and the Judiciary

The early 1970s were a relatively peaceful period in police / picket line confrontation. Between the early 20th century and the Heath era, stronger trade unions, closer government supervision of the police, the growth of civil liberties groups and a societal decrease in inequality had all served as factors which changed the nature of factory-gate confrontations.[1] However, the troubles in Northern Ireland had forced the British police to adopt more militaristic approaches previously reserved for the former colonial police. From 1974 onwards, every British police force was assigned a Police Support Unit (PSU). The PSUs were made up of 23 officers – one inspector, two sergeants and twenty constables. The PSU officers did not wear traditional police uniforms. Instead, they were equipped with riot shields, American-style riot-sticks and visored helmets. One of the first major deployments of the PSU's was at the Notting Hill Riots in 1977.[2] In April 1979, a New Zealand-born teacher, Blair Peach, had attended an anti-fascist demonstration in Southall, London. As the demo ended and Peach was walking home, he was clubbed to the head by a member of the Met's Special Patrol Group. Peach died from the blow. Later the same day, militarised police entered an African-Caribbean community centre, lined the stairs, and batoned everyone who tried to leave the building.[3]

The PSUs saw a marked increase in their deployment, particularly in the 1980s. The military-style units were deployed at the Bristol riots in 1980 and the Brixton riots in 1981. At both of those disturbances, aggressive, military-style policing – beforehand only seen in Northern Ireland, was evident. Helmets, shields, batons, cavalry, military formations, snatch squads and organised violence were all deployed.[4] In the Liverpool borough of Toxteth, flashpoints and standoffs between Merseyside Police and the predominantly black community had become frequent by the end of the 1970s. However, there was also a series of clashes in the mainly white, working-class borough of Knowsley. In June 1979, a series of mass confrontations between police and locals in Huyton left three officers hospitalised, numerous locals injured and 14 people launching complaints against the police for assault and perjury.[5] In the case of Toxteth, the area was within walking distance of Liverpool city centre, but Merseyside police would patrol the junction between the two locations, turning back black youths. On the 6th July 1981, the streets of Toxteth exploded into a series of riots that would last for over a month. In their response to the riots, Merseyside police deployed army-

[1] Andy Beckett. *When the Lights Went Out: Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber 2009), p77.
[2] Robert Reiner. *The Politics of the Police* (Oxford: Oxford UP 2010), p87.
[3] Phil Scraton. *Power, Conflict and Criminalisation* (Oxon: Taylor and Francis 2007), p18.
[4] Bob Fine & Robert Millar (&eds.) 'Law of Market and Rule of Law,' in *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p13.
[5] Scraton, *Power, Conflict*, p20.

style Land Rovers onto Toxteth's streets. CS gas was fired at the public for the first time. 'Barrier-penetrating' projectiles were fired at four people, who were all seriously injured. The Merseyside Chief Constable, Kenneth Oxford, later admitted that these devices were not meant to be fired in public order situations.[6] By 1981, in Liverpool at least, militarised policing was now commonplace as police focus seemed to move away from crime control and toward the control of public order, industrial action and political protest.[7]

Giving advice on how the government should conduct itself after it had provoked a strike, the Ridley Report had highlighted police and picketing as a key issue to address. Instruction was offered on how best to overcome the violence that had marred previous industrial disputes, with Ridley making direct reference to what he called 'the Saltley Gate mob' of 1972.[8] The Report had called for the formation of a 'large, mobile squad of police,' to be used in any 'crunch situation to uphold the law' and to overcome 'violent picketing.'[9] Before 1979, there had been no national police force in Britain. The police were organised into 52 local forces, each headed by a Chief Constable. Authority was divided between the Home Secretary, local police authorities and Chief Constables.[10] However, the Thatcher government had set up the National Reporting Centre (NRC) in 1979, centralising Britain's police forces for the first time. During the early stages of the strike, Thatcher made it clear that she thought that certain forces were not 'enforcing the law' strictly enough when it came to the flying pickets.[11] In adherence with the stealth approach, Thatcher publicly distanced the government from any hands-on practicalities in regard to policing the strike. In private, however, the Prime Minister went to great lengths to make it clear to senior officers that she 'would not let them down' and would offer all of the 'practical support' that was required.[12] By 1984 the NRC controlled 416 well-drilled PSU units totalling 13,500 officers.[13] PSU's could be sent into any area in the country to swell the numbers of regional police. The establishment of the NRC and its mobile squads was a definitive move away from traditional forms of policing. Whereas in 1972, the flying pickets of the NUM had come up against regular policemen, by 1984 the NRC's forces were in the form of the shield-clad and baton-wielding PSU's.[14] Rather than impartial defenders of the law, the

[6] Ibid, p27.
[7] Fine and Miller, 'Rule of Law,' p13.
[8] Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group 1978 (the Ridley Report), *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795 Confidential Annex, p25. All further references as RR.
[9] Ibid
[10] Margaret Thatcher. *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins 1993), p347.
[11] Ibid, p345.
[12] Ibid, p348.
[13] Ibid
[14] John Saville. 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.

new equipment made the officers look more like a powerful paramilitary organisation, at the disposal of the state – a spectacle previously unseen in British policing.[15]

In March 1979, during the last months of the Labour government, Thatcher wrote to the then Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, asking him if he could, for future reference, inform chief constables of their 'responsibilities' when it came to picketing.[16] Rees wrote back, offering reservations about being asked to intervene in that way. He told Thatcher that it was 'unconstitutional' to 'tell chief constables how to enforce the law.'[17] The Leader of the Opposition was distinctly unimpressed, and wrote a strongly-worded reply, accusing Rees of previously stating that such interference could occur – in particular circumstances such as '1972' (a reference to Saltley Gate).[18] Thatcher was keen to point out that she was not asking Rees to act unconstitutionally, though that seemed an odd claim given her previous letter. Rees was resolute. He wrote again, rebuffing Thatcher's criticism and feeling the need to tell her directly that 'it is not the job of the Home Secretary to give instructions to the police about the day to day conduct of their job, and that includes the enforcement of the law.'[19] By 1984, the Home Secretary was the committed Thatcher loyalist, Leon Brittan. Thatcher told Brittan to ensure that all Chief Constables in strike-bound areas were reminded that 'vigorous action' against the pickets would be popular with the public, and that the chief constables should be 'expected to take account of that.'[20] Unlike Rees, Brittan offered no reservations concerning unconstitutional interference.

The behaviour of the NUM's flying pickets was not always faultless. During picket-line confrontations throughout the early part of 1984, the flying pickets aimed to make themselves a match for the police. They would make life as difficult as possible for the officers sent to marshal them. The striking miners were tough, physical men; well-used to hard labour and furious with the lines of police who faced them.[21] Using 1972 as their template, they would push police lines back, chanting 'easy, easy,' pour ridicule on the officers and, when massing in such large numbers, match the police by offering a very physically-intimidating sight.[22] Thatcher alleged that she had seen reports of miners on the picket-line pelting police officers with bricks, darts and other missiles.[23] The Prime Minister also highlighted other reports which had revealed violence and death-threats aimed

[15] Ibid
[16] Thatcher to then Home Secretary Rees, March 1979, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.
[17] Letter from the then Home Secretary Merlyn Rees to Thatcher, 23rd March 1979, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.
[18] Thatcher to Rees, 28th March 1979, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1329.
[19] Rees to Thatcher, 12th April 1979, *TNA Kew*, PREM19.1329.
[20] Minutes from Cabinet Meeting, 15th March 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/78.
[21] Andy McSmith. *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Constable 2011), p161.
[22] Ibid
[23] Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years*, p352.

at working-miners and their families.[24] With the Tories still carrying the NUM-inflicted scars of 1972 and 1974, Scargill's militant tactics were enough to give the union demonic status with Brittan.[25] Speaking early in 1984, the Home Secretary asserted that 'Mr Scargill..hate[s] our democratic system.'[26] In contrast, the police were portrayed by Thatcher-aligned Tory ministers as the defenders of democracy, a brave bulwark against the bureaucratic dictatorship of Scargill and other union leaders.[27]

The Tories had implemented the Edmund-Davies Pay Increase, a substantial wage rise throughout the entire service, on the first full day of Thatcher's administration.[28] More pay had led to a swell in new recruits in the early eighties.[29] That financial reward, coupled with Thatcher's continuing public statements supporting the police, seemed to attract the loyalty of many rank-and-file police officers, many of whom were sent to marshal the picket-lines and some of whom were part of the new, militarised PSUs. A PC from the West Country, who was present at several picket-line confrontations in the early months of the strike, revealed that his force had been practicing taking on the miners for two years, by 'marching around wet army camps and having people throw squeezy-bottles and things.'[30] A Met PC compared police baton-charges to colonial policing, reflecting that it had been 'like Palestine or something.'[31] More senior officers also used the language of military campaigners. Remembering his own part in picket-line violence, a Sergeant in a northern force remembered that 'they had the advantage of higher ground.'[32] A Superintendent from the Home Counties remembered that 'there was a railway bridge that you could defend. We moved two units and took it, then held it for an hour – but at a cost.'[33] Those statements seem to denote a feeling among some police officers that, rather than disinterested arbiters of the law, they felt themselves to be, as one Deputy Chief Constable from a northern force put it, as an 'army of occupation.'[34] Many of those opposing the police appeared to agree with that appraisal. As well as on the picket-line, the police were deployed into pit villages deemed to be militant. Village and

[24] Ibid, p365.
[25] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners (London: Verso 2014),* p23.
[26] Leon Brittan quoted in Milne, *Enemy Within*, p10.
[27] Bob Fine & Robert Miller (&eds.) 'Introduction,' in *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p2.
[28] Tom Cockcroft. *Police Culture: Themes and Concepts* (New York: Routledge 2013), p77.
[29] Reiner, *The Politics of the Police,* p93.
[30] Roger Graef. *Talking Blues: The Police in Their Own Words* (London: Collins Harvill 1990), p61.
[31] Ibid, p67.
[32] Ibid, p73.
[33] Ibid, p62.
[34] Ibid, p72.

county borders were controlled and 'sensitive districts' occupied.[35] As one Rotherham miner reflected, 'it is now easier to get out of East Berlin than it is to get out of South Yorkshire.'[36] Many officers seemed spurred on by the hostile and stigmatising climate of opinion against the miners.[37] As well as their fondness for Thatcher, some police officers appeared to display general animosity toward trade unionists. PC Sloan, in the February 1984 edition of the Police Review, offered an insight when he remarked that strikers of any description were often, according to him, 'brainwashed by their union reps and unwilling to show themselves to have any human feelings.'[38] As well as using public speeches to support the police, senior Tories used the same method to portray trade unionists and the Labour Party as anti-police. At a Police Federation Conference on the 30th May, Douglas Hurd, now a Home Office Minister, asked the gathered officers a loaded question - 'it must worry many policemen when police are regularly attacked by one of the main parties of the state?'[39]

The private-sector loyalists of the DSPU had warned previously that such open political bias, and accompanying aggressiveness, was not beneficial to the overall adherence to stealth recommended in the Ridley Report. On 18th June, a day that would become infamous in British industrial relations history, Redwood and Pascall both wrote to the Prime Minister to urge police caution.[40] They argued that the government had to be careful to avoid accusations of creating a police state. The DSPU reminded the Prime Minister of the importance of stealth in the overall plan. To avoid a head-on collision, they advised Thatcher that 'preventative patrols' should be stepped-up in 'vulnerable villages.'[41] Thatcher underlined the suggestion. Residents of those villages continued to live under the watchful eyes of a besieging army of police officers, brought in from all over the country. Of particular notoriety was the Metropolitan Police Force of London, drafted in on paid overtime to occupy many northern mining villages.[42] Within the mining communities, there were numerous accusations of invading Met officers physically and verbally abusing women and children.[43] As animosity continued to escalate between the mining communities and the confrontational, occupying police - who were publicly supported by Thatcher and other senior

[35] Raphael Samuel. 'Introduction,' in Raphael Samuel, Barbara Bloomfield & Guy Boanas (eds.) *The Enemy Within: Pit Villages and the Miners' Strike of 1984-85* (London: Routledge 1986), p16.
[36] Ibid
[37] David Waddington. 'Public order policing in South Yorkshire 1984-2011: the case for a permissive approach to crowd control,' *Contemporary Social Science* 6.3 (November 2011), pp.309-324.
[38] Ibid
[39] Minutes of Douglas Hurd Speech to Police Federation, 30th May 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623.
[40] Redwood and Pascall to Thatcher, 18th June 1984, *TNA Kew,* PREM19/1331.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Waddington, 'Authoritive Institutions,' p111.
[43] Ibid

ministers - the DSPU's attempt to steer the government back away from a full-on confrontation – warned against in the Ridley Report – would not succeed.

On the afternoon of the 18th June, the Battle of Orgreave occurred after mass picketing at the Orgreave coking plant in South Yorkshire. For Scargill and the miners, Orgreave was to be a repeat of the famous Saltley Gate victory in 1972. For South Yorkshire Chief Constable Peter Wright and his deputy Tony Clement (the latter of whom was in charge of policing on the day), a chance to inflict revenge on the miners and reciprocate Thatcher's perceived unwavering support for the police, by re-establishing the force's Saltley-damaged reputation for dealing with large numbers of gathered pickets. All of that was, however, in complete antithesis to both the Ridley Report's recommendations and the advice of the DSPU. Any notions of stealth were abandoned as scenes of hand-to-hand fighting and pitched battles between riot-gear-clad, truncheon-wielding police and thousands of flying pickets were broadcast nationwide. Miners' described nightmarish scenes as hundreds of mounted police charged lines of unarmed pickets screaming 'come on you bastards' and carried out brutal and, at times, indiscriminate violence.[44] Many miners were assaulted and received injuries, hundreds were arrested. Several officers were also hospitalised. In 1990, several officers present at Orgreave retold their experiences to the police historian Roger Graef. An officer from a northern force reminisced that 'it was great to see [the mounted police] smashing into all them bastards. It was the greatest thing I ever saw.'[45] A PC from an eastern force resented the fact that the police had been politicised, but admitted that 'no question, we were Maggie's boys.'[46] A Met PC, the same one who had compared the picket-line to Palestine, defended the indiscriminate batoning of pickets. The officer admitted that 'you are going to hit some innocent people.'[47] However, he felt that this behaviour was justified in the circumstances. A PC from the Home Counties agreed. Reflecting on his own picket-line violence, he fondly remembered the time as when 'some poor sods meet Mister Wood.'[48] The PC went on to opine that 'breaking a collarbone is best, then an elbow or a leg.'[49] Solicitor Gareth Peirce, who arrived at Police Headquarters to represent arrested miners, reflected that 'they needed doctors, not lawyers.'[50]

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[44] Daryl Leeworthy, 'The Secret Life of Us: 1984, the Miners' Strike and the Place of Biography in Writing History From Below,' *European Review of History* 19.5 (October 2012) pp.825-846.
[45] Graef, *Talking Blues*, p73.
[46] Ibid, p75.
[47] Ibid, p67.
[48] Ibid, p64.
[49] Ibid
[50] Gareth Pierce in 'Battle For Orgreave,' Dir. Yvette Vanson. Prod. Vanson Wardle and Channel 4. *Youtube*. Uploaded 5th Feb. 2012. Viewed 4 Oct. 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn7DZSagDI4 (Orig 1985)

The scenes at Orgreave had worried some within the government enough to secretly consider drastic measures – the use of the British Army. Fearing further disturbances, Brittan requested that funds be made available in order to convert the local RAF barracks to receive more police PSUs, even though up to 8,000 officers were already present.[51] If no funds were forthcoming, he warned, then the armed forces would have to be used instead.[52] Some government officials now wanted a head-on collision, and called for army troops to be brought in to the fight.[53] They pointed out that the Queen could be used to declare a state of emergency.[54] This left the DSPU at odds with some ministers. The DSPU were still committed to the Ridley Report's stealth approach. The day after the Battle of Orgreave, with ministers calling for Scargill's blood, Pascall warned Thatcher that arresting Scargill at that moment, without sufficient charges, would make a 'martyr' out of the NUM President.[55] The Prime Minister wanted the miners' leader arrested, but the right evidence would have to be in place first, to secure a successful prosecution (see Case Study 2). In the direct aftermath of Orgreave, with no guarantee that an arrested Scargill would be jailed, she followed the advice of those she trusted the most - her private-sector loyalists within the DSPU. Deciding against any overt use of the armed forces, Thatcher authorised the large release of funds requested by Brittan and sought assurances from the Home Secretary that the money would be speedily and directly delivered to the police forces who needed it for extra manpower.[56]

The DSPU did not, however, rule-out the use of the army – only the overt use of the army. They drew attention to the Emergency Powers Act of 1964, which would allow troops to be brought in covertly, without declaring a state of emergency. Thatcher underlined the idea, to show her approval.[57] There is no clear evidence that troops were deployed, despite claims from some miners that this was the case. Nevertheless, the evidence does show that such a move was a serious consideration. A month after Orgreave, with the dust settled, the Prime Minister attended a meeting about the strike. With Thatcher, the DSPU and senior ministers present, it was decided that the best policy was to 'use troops as far as possible without declaring a State of Emergency.'[58] Thatcher's private-sector loyalists within the DSPU had found a way to deploy armed troops against the miners while still adhering to the stealth principle. The army might be brought in, as long as it was not publicly known. Because they were on the front line, the stealth approach was not applicable to the

[51] Leon Brittan to Thatcher, 3rd July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[52] Ibid
[53] Untitled Report on proclamation of state of emergency 14th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[54] Ibid
[55] Pascall to Thatcher, 19th June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[56] Handwritten by Thatcher on Report from Home Secretary Leon Brittan, 3rd July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[57] Untitled Report on proclamation of state of emergency 14th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[58] Thatcher cited in Untitled Record of meeting at no 10, 17th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.

police. Some senior police officers became annoyed by the DSPU's approach which to them seemed like the government was attempting to run the strike, and simultaneously pretend that they had nothing to do with it. After the strike, at a Police Federation Conference, an inspector told the conference that in his view 'the police were being abused and violently assaulted in order to allow the government to maintain a low profile for political purposes.'[59]

Although the Ridley Report had not mentioned the British courts, it soon became obvious to Thatcher, Brittan and the DSPU that interference into that area would be vital – or else the changes in policing might prove meaningless. By December 1984, 8,907 people had been arrested in connection with the strike.[60] Most, as to be expected, were arrested in Nottinghamshire (2,374), Derbyshire (1,179) and South Yorkshire (1,256).[61] Most arrests were for public order offences or obstructing police. However, there were 32 different offences in total, ranging from reckless driving to murder. Thatcher and the DSPU knew that it was pointless getting the police to make so many arrests, if the offenders were soon to be back on the streets, and back on the picket line. After Orgreave, the police implemented a policy of maximum arrests on picket lines.[62] As well as that, snatch squads were sent to miners' houses, kicking down doors and arresting people in their own homes.[63] With so many arrested, the government faced a backlog of cases that needed to go before a magistrate.

Rather than let the miners stand trial fairly and without prejudice, the DSPU called on ministers to strong-arm judges and magistrates into giving out particularly harsh sentences. In August, two months after Orgreave, Redwood called for pressure to be put on courts 'to give exemplary sentences to miners,' as long as such a request could be made without public attention.[64] In turn, Thatcher asked the Attorney General, Michael Havers, whether there existed 'any means of increasing [the] effectiveness and enforcement of criminal law.'[65] Responding, Havers wrote to highlight the 'usefulness of offences such as riot, unlawful assembly and affray.'[66] The Attorney General appeared to acquiesce to Thatcher's request by insinuating that such unspecific offenses could be used as a cover - for issuing unusually harsh sentences. To cope with the backlog, temporary courts were set up in Chesterfield, St Helens, Mansfield and Peterlee. All achieved

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[59] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster 1992). p90.
[60] Brittan to Thatcher, 18th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[61] Ibid,
[62] Lee Christian. 'Restriction Without Conviction,' in Bob Fine & Robert Miller (eds.) *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p122.
[63] Ibid, p121.
[64] Redwood to Thatcher, 29th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[65] Brittan to Thatcher, June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[66] Attorney General letter to Thatcher, 4th June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.

notoriety throughout the mining communities.[67] Any magistrate with any connection to the Labour Party, the NUM or other trade union was disqualified from hearing cases of striking miners.[68] This meant that the majority of judges held Conservative sympathies, though those faced no such disqualification. Judges were brought in from elsewhere in the country to hurry through the sentencing.[69] A Thorseby Picket noticed that the 'judges are always on the government's side.'[70] An Ollerton Womens' Action Group member complained that 'the courts are all Tory-run.'[71] An Ollerton picket had been in trouble before. He remarked that the 'last time I was being tried for my crime. This time I was being tried as a striking miner and no other reason.'[72] Indeed, the courts were being used to generate a 'picketing equals crime' equation.[73] However, the spectacle of senior government officials pressurising judges and magistrates to hand-out harsh sentences might be difficult to legitimise if it ever became public. The Lord Chancellor, Quintin Hogg, had warned of Britain's susceptibility to an 'elective dictatorship' in 1976.[74] In response to the DSPU's call for exemplary sentences, he told Thatcher that 'it may be inappropriate, or even unconstitutional for the government to seek to influence judges in this way.'[75] However, Hogg was operating within an established culture of conformity. Despite his warning, the Lord Chancellor demonstrated that he understood the adherence to stealth approach as well as anyone else. He left a handwritten note at the end of his letter stating the following – 'This is sensitive territory. Verbum Sapienti Suffcit' [A word to the wise is sufficient].[76]

Due to government pressure suggested by the DSPU, total custodial sentences for miners shot up from 47 between the whole of March to November, to 106 by the end of December.[77] Nevertheless, this might still have felt like a defeat for Thatcher and her loyalists, when the total number of arrests was 8,907. Writing to the Prime Minister in November, Havers explained the problem. He remarked that it was 'one thing to be satisfied that an offence had been committed, quite another to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a particular person committed it.'[78] Despite

[67] Christian, 'Restriction Without Conviction, p121.
[68] Penny Green. *The Enemy Without: Policing and Class Consciousness in the Miners' Strike* (Milton Keynes: OpenUP 1990), p99.
[69] Nigel Pantling private Secretary to Leon Brittan letter to Thatcher, 1st October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1334.
[70] Unnamed Thoresby Picket cited in Green, *The Enemy Without*, p94.
[71] Green, *The Enemy Without*, p94.
[72] Ibid, p99.
[73] Ibid, p107.
[74] Quintin Hogg, 'The Richard Dimbleby Lecture,' Orig 1976. *BBC i-Player*, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00fr9gh (Accessed 15th July 2019).
[75] Quintin Hogg to Thatcher, 18th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[76] Ibid
[77] Ibid
[78] Attorney General Havers to Thatcher, 7th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.

Hogg's 'word to the wise,' it was not proving possible for the judiciary, however compliant, to bend the law far enough to lock up Thatcher and the DSPU's political opponents on a large enough scale - without serious constitutional infringements, the risk of unwanted publicity and a threat to the overall stealth approach. Hogg's note echoed the recommendations of the DSPU – both in his willingness to cross constitutional boundaries and lean on the judiciary, but also in his mindfulness regarding stealth and his willingness to conform, despite his reservations. As such, the Ridley Report might be seen as leaving a mark on the justice system - via the DSPU and in the Lord Chancellor's own adherence to the culture of conformity.

Chapter 7: 'The Enemy Within is So Much Harder to Conquer': The DSPU, the NACODS Dispute and the Sequestrators

Throughout the strike, the DSPU produced weekly reports on the national trickle back to work. By September 1984, the amount of pits on strike compared to those working fully was 102-42 in favour of the strikers, with some men present at 24.[1] Although more pits were on strike than not, the fact that nearly a third of pits were operational meant that the government still had a strong hand. Those operational pits, alongside the record levels of stockpiled coal, the increased oil-burn at power-stations, and the industry-specific peculiarities which meant that a coal strike took a long time to have any effect, meant that the DSPU could afford to advise a hard line against the NUM.

After the miners had tried and failed to repeat the Saltley Gate incident, at Orgreave in June, Redwood called for the suspension of all talks – believing, as the Ridley Report had suggested, that the government needed only to wait out the miners.[2] In September 1984, however, a series of events led Thatcher and the DSPU to fear defeat. Of particular concern to the DSPU was the 'NACODS' union. The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS) represented colliery deputies and officials in every pit. A strike by their members would shut down the operational coalfields in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, as well as pits in other areas that were defying the strike. That would, for the first time, change the strike into a truly national one and be a major boost to Scargill and the flying pickets. For the DSPU's Policy Director, it was imperative that this did not occur. Redwood advised the Prime Minister that 'all efforts [must] be made to appease [the] NACODS leaders.'[3] That same day, Peter Walker told the Cabinet that he had it on good authority that the NACODS President was sympathetic to Scargill and might try to influence the NACODS membership to vote for a strike.[4] The cause of the NACODS dispute had been a circular issued on the 15th August. The NCB had hastily retracted the circular, and Redwood stressed the importance of informing the NACODS leaders that this was the case. In complete contrast to his policy toward the NUM, Redwood proposed a 'full week of talks,' in the hope that this might 'confuse the issue.'[5] In case that did not prove enough, Redwood advised ministers to make sure that they could still access their accumulated stockpiles of coal, in case of a NACODS strike.[6] A report

[1] DSPU Report to Thatcher, 6th September 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1333.
[2] Redwood to Thatcher, 13th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[3] Redwood to Thatcher, 13th September 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1333.
[4] Peter Walker, Cabinet Meeting, 13th September 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/79.
[5] Redwood to Thatcher, 3rd October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1334.
[6] Redwood to Thatcher, 19th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1334.

in late October confirmed that, if a NACODS strike did take place, endurance would last only until January.[7]

British Nuclear Fuel Chief and DSPU member, Peter Warry, warned that the drift back to work was too slow, and that the government was in danger of losing the initiative.[8] Shell's Peter Wybrew offered a contingency plan. He pointed out that power stations, already at maximum oil-burn on the recommendation of both the DSPU and the Ridley Report, could now be run on oil burners alone, taking coal out of the equation altogether.[9] However, the Prime Minister seemed reluctant to undermine the entire coal industry in that way – perhaps considering such a move as a full-on attack, one out-of-step with the continued, pursued policy of stealth. Moreover, the NACODS dispute had come at a time when the government was feeling vulnerable due to a raft of other industrial disputes. The Department of Employment had reported that workers at *Cammell Laird* in Birkenhead, *British Aerospace* in Filton, and rank-and-file civil servants in both Durham and Longbenton, were all taking strike action.[10] Up until the NACODS dispute, however, Thatcher's private-sector loyalists within the DSPU did not appear to consider the possibility that they, and the government, might actually lose the strike and be forced to back down. The threat of a NACODS strike did not dampen the taste for the theatrical often displayed by the DSPU members. Warry worried about a 'Dunkirk spirit' emerging amongst the miners.[11] He warned that upcoming government negotiations with local government councils could end with 'the forces of darkness joining in a cause celebre.'[12] Alongside the miners and the city of Liverpool, many of the country's local authorities had been the target of Thatcher's 'enemy within' speech in July. While the DSPU concentrated on the miners, local councillors and civil servants were both being secretly targeted by others sections of the state by November (see case study 3).

Disappointingly for Scargill and the striking miners, NACODS accepted a last-minute deal from the NCB, and called off their strike in the most dramatic circumstances - on the very morning it was due to begin. At a Cabinet meeting, Thatcher correctly labelled this last-minute u-turn as a 'serious blow' for the NUM.[13] For the DSPU, the possibility of a catastrophic setback had been averted by following Redwood's line of 'appeasement.' Reassured, Wybrew called for MacGregor to

[7] Untitled Report on endurance in event of NACODS strike, October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[8] Warry to Thatcher, 22nd November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[9] Wybrew to Thatcher, 23rd October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[10] Untitled briefing on industrial action from the Department of Employment, 17th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[11] Warry to Thatcher, 28th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[12] Ibid
[13] Margaret Thatcher, Cabinet Meeting, 25th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/79.

implement redundancies approaching one-hundred-thousand, as long as the NCB Chief did not publicly state where that idea had come from.[14]

Despite the continuing adherence to stealth, the role of the media was seen as vital to the DSPU during the strike. The private-sector loyalists (and government ministers) often talked about the importance of the police and the NCB being *seen* to win, as if that was as important as the victory itself. As such, they heavily monitored the newspapers and television news, and relied on Tory support from the right-wing press to ram their case home. One tactic, suggested by the DSPU, was to present the argument in the media as one exclusively about law and order. That allowed the government to avoid discussion of the real political and economic issues behind the strike. From the early days of the strike, Pascall advised Thatcher of the importance of presentation. The BP-man told the Prime Minister that the government had to be successful in 'present[ing] anti-picketing measures as police action to maintain law and order.'[15] The media seemed happy to oblige. On television news, police attacks on pickets went un-reported.[16] Police numbers and heavy-handedness were under-reported or ignored.[17] TV camera crews were four times as likely to be behind police lines, than picket lines.[18] On the evening news after the Battle of Orgreave, sequences were shown in a different order to which they had occurred, in order to create a narrative of a beleaguered police force.[19] In the press, the miners were portrayed as crazed ideologues, led by a madman. Scargill suffered endless personal attacks and was ridiculed for claiming (correctly) that the NCB had a secret closure list for pits. *The Sun* was the most notorious. A strident cheerleader for the Thatcher government, the paper often used crude and hostile language to deride the miners and their leaders. Scargill was recast as Hitler, a comparison so obviously flawed that the papers' printers at Wapping refused to print the edition.[20] The newspaper went ahead and printed that day's edition with a blank page on the front. Throughout the mainstream media, there existed a consensus of unquestioned assumption of police neutrality.[21] The government also enjoyed positive spin, portrayed as the benevolent, neutral guardian of the national interest. The DSPU encouraged that positive propaganda and advised more.[22] In December, after the tide had turned decisively the

[14] Wybrew to Thatcher, 22nd February 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1579.
[15] Pascall to Thatcher, 20th March 1984, *TNA Kew,* PREM19/1330.
[16] David Waddington. 'Authorative Institutions,' in David Waddington, Maggie Wykes, & Chas Critcher (eds.) *Split at the Seams? Community Continuity and Change After the 1984-5 Coal Dispute* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991), p118.
[17] Ibid
[18] Penny Green. *The Enemy Without: Policing and Class Consciousness in the Miners' Strike* (Milton Keynes: OpenUP 1990), p166.
[19] Waddington, 'Authoritive Institutions,' p131.
[20] Ibid
[21] Green, *The Enemy Without*, p157.
[22] Warry to Thatcher, 7th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.

government's way, Warry advised that the Conservative-supporting media should now be leaned on to push the narrative a step further. 'Anyone who supports the strike is also a supporter of the violence.'[23]

Though the government benefitted from acute media bias in their favour, the DSPU members were still cautious. They took out adverts in what they saw as the left-wing press. Taking out a full-page advertisement in the *Mirror* in April 1984, the government portrayed the NUM as belligerent deal-refusers. As discussed above, this was the exact opposite of the truth. Thatcher was personally pleased with the ad.[24] Both Redwood and Pascall wrote of the dangers of 'going soft' in the eyes of the general public.[25] In June, a fortnight after the Battle of Orgreave, Thatcher reminded the Cabinet of the vital importance of media coverage of the dispute.[26] Wary of any deviation from the orthodox narrative, Redwood lamented an episode of the BBC's *Newsnight* in September.[27] The episode had stated that coal stocks could be running low. Redwood ordered all three of his DSPU deputies to step up the propaganda and push the narrative of stocks lasting well into the next year. Throughout sections of the media a false narrative was created, in order to recast the miners' leaders as belligerent and militant deal-refusers, the NCB as offering sensible and generous deals, and the government as rational peace envoys. As Pascall put it, in the eyes of the press, 'we have been very successful in keeping the dispute at industrial rather than political level – this should be continued.'[28] The DSPU had long admitted that they viewed the strike as political. In adherence with the stealth narrative, however, the opposite was to be maintained publicly.

By November, the strikers' advantage had fallen to 47-45, with some men present at 82. Victory now appeared only a matter of time for the DSPU and the government. The Ridley Report had instructed that the Tories would, once all of the other recommendations were in place, only have to wait out the miners. Redwood and the DSPU had repeatedly made the same recommendation – even during the heated aftermath of Orgreave. Thatcher, despite her personal dislike of Scargill, had in public at least, kept up the pretence that the government was scarcely involved.[29] By the end of January 1985, the amount of pits on strike compared to those working fully

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[23] Ibid
[24] Emphasis handwritten by Thatcher on copy of advertisement in Daily Mirror, 24th April 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1330.
[25] DSPU report, 18th April 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1330.
[26] Margaret Thatcher, Cabinet Meeting, 28th June 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/79.
[27] Redwood to Thatcher, 13th September 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1333.
[28] Pascall to Thatcher, 25th May 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1330.
[29] Victor Allen. 'The Year Long Miners' Strike, March 1984-March 1985: A Memoir,' *Industrial Relations Journal* 40.4 (December 2009) pp.278-291.

was 22-49, with some men present at 103.[30] Thatcher was informed by ministers in late January that some amongst the NUM leadership, now faced with the very real prospect of outright defeat, had become increasingly desperate to resume negotiations. Thatcher was clear. 'There is no purpose in further negotiations.'[31] Ned Smith, the NCB senior executive, was appalled by the government's refusal to enter into talks. Smith had met with Scargill and McGahey in December, when both of the NUM representatives had told the NCB man that they wanted to resume talks. Later that month, Smith also met with NUM General Secretary Peter Heathfield, after which both men left happy that an agreement could be reached. Upon leaving the meeting, however, Smith was outraged to find that that one of MacGregor's own private-sector 'Special Advisors,' David Hart, had given a press release announcing that the talks had broken down acrimoniously. Not only was Hart not present at the meeting, but the press release was made whilst the meeting was still taking place. Smith, it must be remembered, was a harsh critic of Scargill and the other left-wing members of the NUM Executive. Nevertheless, he had become fed-up of the 'unjust and immoral' behaviour of the government, MacGregor and the 'advisors.' He tended his resignation.[32] The miners' leaders continued to press for talks. In February, the government wrote to Heathfield to ask him to cease with constant requests for dialogue because the government no longer found any 'basis for entering into talks.'[33]

Although the Ridley Report had not mentioned the law courts in regard to arrested miners, it did suggest, very clearly, that the courts could be useful to the government in another field - finance. The Report had pointed out that the 'greatest deterrent to any strike is to cut off the supply of money to the strikers.'[34] As such, it continued, the government should look to introduce legislation to deny unemployment benefits to strikers. Social security benefits were highlighted as an area which could become a particularly 'fruitful field' in the planned attack.[35] As soon as they had gained power in 1979, the Tories began introducing a raft of legislation aimed at limiting the ability of potential strikers to fund themselves. After less than a year in office, the *Social Security Bill* was brought in. The bill included *clause 6*, which changed the law so that strikers were not entitled to any unemployment benefits. The Social Services minister and self-proclaimed Thatcher-critic, Norman Fowler, defended the bill, branding it as a means to 'restore [a] fairer bargaining balance between

[30] DSPU report to Thatcher, 28th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[31] Thatcher, transcript of telephone call, 20th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[32] Ned Smith. *The 1984 Miners' Strike: The Actual Account* (Whitstable: Oyster Press 1997), p154.
[33] Untitled Letter to NUM General Secretary Heathfield, 8th February 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1579.
[34] Ridley Report, Confidential Annex, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation*.
[35] Ibid

employers and trade unions.'[36] By July 1984, four months into the strike, the government had moved to block tax rebates that were due to striking miners. A letter from the House of Lords asked under what authority they were being withheld. Quoting the *Finance Act of 1981*, Thatcher defended the move, replying that 'any refund can only be applied once an employee is back to work.'[37] After successfully navigating the NACODS scare in September, and with the striking miners struggling to feed themselves and their families, the government kept the new legislation coming. In October, a report welcomed another 'change in regulations' which stopped mortgage interest being paid to striking miners, as had been their entitlement under existing legislation.[38] In November, the Department for Health and Social Security announced 'new rules' which meant that there would now be higher deductions from the dole payments of anyone under suspicion of striking.[39] At a Cabinet meeting in November, Thatcher floated the idea of cutting off the small allowance that strikers could claim if they had children. The Prime Minister was only talked out of it after Fowler argued that such a move might buy the destitute families' sympathy from the general public. Thatcher reluctantly dropped the idea.[40] The idea for the raft of legislation targeted at the striking miners and their families had been clearly laid out in the Ridley Report. However, in the case of the NUM, the government had a further problem not identified by Ridley in 1978. With such a large membership, the union itself was rumoured to be worth millions of pounds – money which could potentially be used to defy and undermine the government's legislative assault.

For the DSPU, the funds of the NUM became a prime target. After Orgreave, Redwood had urged Thatcher and Brittan to lean on the judiciary in order to influence sentencing. Although the results of that intervention were mixed, it might be possible to have another 'word to the wise,' or at least convince some elements of the seemingly compliant judiciary to turn a blind eye to unconstitutional meddling. From July onwards, Redwood and the DSPU made the same recommendation of direct intervention in the law courts – though this time in order to seize NUM funds.[41] Within two weeks, Redwood's suggestion was implemented. In South Wales, Welsh pickets had defied an injunction against picketing, granted to two haulage firms. The DSPU spotted an opportunity. On the 1st August, a high-court judge ordered the seizure of the entire funds of the

[36] John Saville. 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.
[37] Thatcher's Secretary's Reply to letter from House of Lords, July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[38] Untitled government advisor report to Thatcher, 19th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1334.
[39] Untitled Report from Department of Health and Social Security, 3rd November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[40] Discussion between Margaret Thatcher and Norman Fowler, Cabinet Meeting, 15th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/79.
[41] Redwood to Thatcher, 13th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.

South Wales area of the NUM.[42] That was a massive blow for the Welsh miners, who called for help from the Trade Unions Congress. Their calls were ignored. For Redwood and the DSPU, a method was needed to expand the sequestration to the entire NUM.

MacGregor's 'special advisor' and property dealer, David Hart, was a millionaire who lived in an apartment at Claridges in London. Hart was an outspoken, committed Thatcherite – a right-wing libertarian who had inherited a fortune from his banking father. Although other business leaders had offered full support to Thatcher's monetarist project, Hart decided to go further. The banker's son would tour the Midlands in his chauffeur-driven Mercedes, trying to find dissatisfied miners who could be used to take the NUM to court, for not having a ballot. As well as having his own wealth to fund him, Hart was bankrolled by other business leaders including John Paul Getty II, Hector Laing of United Biscuits and Lord Hanson of the Hanson Trust – the latter of which was a large donor to the Economic League.[43] Hart was known to have an inflated view of himself. He claimed that he had personally orchestrated the Battle of Orgreave in order to inflict a defeat on the striking miners.[44] Hart, alongside Tim Bell of Saatchi & Saatchi, acted as unofficial 'advisors' to MacGregor during the strike – in a similar fashion to Thatcher and the DSPU.

Ned Smith, the NCB's Director General of Industrial Relations, expressed concern at the level of influence MacGregor's private-sector loyalists seemed to have over the chairman. At one meeting between Smith and MacGregor, during the NACODS dispute, Hart and Bell denounced the NACODS leaders as communists in conspiratorial allegiance with Scargill and the NUM Executive.[45] According to Smith, Hart boasted that his 'contacts' could help him to overcome any NACODS strike, just as those 'contacts' would help to defeat the NUM. Despite accusations that Hart was a fantasist, he did have a direct line to Thatcher. In-keeping with his brash personality, Hart publicly bragged about his access to the Prime Minister. Alarmed at Hart's haphazard approach to the stealth plan, Thatcher informed ministers in October that Hart should be told to stop talking about his direct access, particularly to the media.[46] Nevertheless, Thatcher did not move to restrict Hart's access, signifying that she must have considered him to be at least partially valuable. The Special Advisor promised ministers he would be more careful with the press in the future.[47] Hart's tactic was to embroil the

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[42] Sean Matgamma. *Class Against Class: The Miners' Strike 1984-85* (London: Phoenix 2014), p38.
[43] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p126. And – Mike Hughes. *Spies at Work: The Definitive History of the Economic League* (London: Lulu 2012), p326.
[44] Ibid
[45] Smith, *The Actual Account*, p177.
[46] Letter from Thatcher to Ministers, 20th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[47] Prime Minister's Office Internal Letter Concerning David Hart, 20th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.

NUM in long-winded and difficult-to-fight legal cases.[48] He was instrumental in setting up the National Working Miners' Committee (NWMC). He was a regular attender at the early meetings of the organisation, whose main aim was to sue the NUM on behalf of anti-strike miners.[49] Hector Laing raised £30,000 for the NWMC from other pro-Thatcher business leaders.[50] The organisation's funds were handled by Hodgkinson and Tallents solicitors, a firm with longstanding ties to the Conservative Party.[51] Considering himself as an insider, Hart sent regular reports to Thatcher on the progress of the lawsuits, as well as information about both striking and working miners' morale. In October, he told the Prime Minister that NACODS members were very unhappy about the strike call, and advised that the government 'should not show any weakness' in the continuing dispute.[52]

Encouraged by Hart's progress, Redwood suggested that the confiscation of funds be broadened to the entire NUM in relation to an ongoing court-case about unpaid fines.[53] On the 25th October, Judge Nicholls found against the NUM on all counts and ordered the seizure of all NUM funds, in Britain and abroad.[54] The reason given was an unpaid fine previously meted out to the NUM, accrued through endless court actions brought about by Hart's NWMC. By November the central NUM funds had been sequestered. A Tory-appointed lawyer was named as 'receiver' of all union funds. In effect, the judiciary had ordered the NUM to hand over its £8.9 million assets, to the very people that the money was supposed to be used to fight against. Peter Warry was stirred to consider abandonment of stealth over the sequestration of funds, which had come only weeks after the collapse of the proposed NACODS strike.[55] With the NACODS strike averted and the sequestration all but complete, the nuclear energy chief pushed for a propaganda offensive to finish of the NUM. He maintained that the government had to keep the initiative, by 'closing more [coal] faces with full publicity.'[56] It was Thatcher's turn to remind a member of the DSPU of the stealth plan. The Prime Minister cautioned all allies and ministers that they should 'avoid gloating,' at least publicly.[57] The NUM leadership launched an appeal against the decision. However, the judiciary

[48] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p126
[49] David Howell. 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984-85 Strike,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.148-164, p158.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid
[52] Untitled Report discussing phone-call with David Hart, 20th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM/1335.
[53] Redwood to Thatcher, 29th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1332.
[54] Matgamma, *Class Against Class*, p38.
[55] Warry to Thatcher, 26th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[56] Ibid
[57] Margaret Thatcher, Cabinet Meeting, 15th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/79.

again seemed less than impartial. After rejecting the appeal out-of-hand, Justice Nicholls forecast a coming 'day of reckoning' for the miners.[58]

The NUM had foreseen the attack on its funds, and had moved the vast bulk of its money overseas – making it much harder to seize. The NUM's struggle against the Thatcher government had won it many admirers abroad. The large French union, Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), attempted to send funds to the NUM. When their money was sequestered, they sent convoys of lorries to England, carrying food and clothing for the striking miners. Home Office Assistant to Brittan, Nigel Pantling, reassured Thatcher and the DSPU that some [lorries] may be refused admission [at Dover] under normal immigration procedures.[59] Despite that veiled threat, Pantling was left to concede that 'the Home Secretary can find no way to exclude them all.'[60] The NUM also received help from the USSR.[61] That may well have been seen by Redwood and some ministers as vindication of their earlier attempts to compare their ideological enemies within and without. Toward the end of 1984, a Soviet delegation was due to visit London on unrelated issues. At the same time, the press was rife with stories of Soviet funding for the miners.[62] A confidential report estimated that the Soviets had handed over more than £1 million.[63] As part of their delegation, the Soviets had provocatively included the top Soviet coal-pit foreman, Strelchenko.[64] The government saw this as a clear act of provocation, and it was decided that the Soviets would be asked outright whether they had donated to the NUM. The Minister for Trade and Industry, Norman Lamont, did raise it with the Soviets, who asserted that the money had been raised and sent directly from Russian miners, in an act of solidarity. Lamont pointed out that Soviet citizens lacked any access to convertible Roubles and could therefore not have taken money out of the USSR.[65] Lamont urged the Prime Minister to tell the Soviets to 'stop meddling in our internal affairs.'[66] Thatcher urged stealth and caution. Urging Lamont to be careful, she reminded him that 'we are always seeking clemency

[58] Report on Justice Nicholls' Statement, December 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[59] Pantling to Thatcher, 11th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[60] Ibid
[61] Matgamma, *Class Against Class*, p38.
[62] John Passmore, 'Scargill Goes to Russians for Help,' *Daily Mail Historical Archive* 16th November 1984, http://find.galegroup.com/dmha/browseEdition.do?prodId=DMHA&userGroupName=edge&tabID=T004&method=doBrowseEdition&mcode=3FDQ&dp=19841116&docPage=browseissue&fromPage=browseIssuePage (Accessed 10th May 2019).
[63] Norman Lamont, letter on Soviet assistance to the NUM, to Thatcher, 21st November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[64] Untitled Report from Foreign Office on Soviet Assistance to NUM, 20th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[65] M Steel to Colin Budd Assistant Private Secretary of the Foreign Office, 20th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, FCO28/6513.
[66] Norman Lamont, letter on Soviet assistance to the NUM, to Thatcher, 21st November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.

and exit visas from them for Soviet citizens.'[67] The Foreign Office also sent reports on a cheque for ten-thousand pounds given to the NUM by Afghan trade unionists.[68] The Foreign Office had been indirectly brought into the implementation of the Ridley Report, chasing and reporting on gestures from the miners' allies from around the world. The justification for FCO involvement was the link with the USSR. As one of the Prime Minister's assistants said in a letter to the Foreign Office, 'the British government now have an interest, going beyond their ordinary political interest, in the sequestrators laying their hands on NUM funds.'[69] The Attorney General Michael Havers, tasked with locating the miners' funds, reported in November that the NUM had up to £5 million in Luxembourg.[70] He also suspected that the NUM had another deposit in bank accounts in Eire. He reassured the Prime Minister that actions were in place to 'freeze and obtain' those overseas funds.[71] Thatcher and the DSPU did not have to wait long. In February, a letter from the Law Officers confirmed that the Luxembourgian government had been pressurized to back down, and hand over all NUM assets.[72] Although Dublin proceedings were still awaited, the Receiver had also 'laid his hands on £600-thousand from Switzerland.'[73] Following the instructions in the Ridley Report and the guidance of the DSPU, the government had waged a successful, legal war on the NUM.

In December, a rival union to the NUM had been set-up by working miners from Nottinghamshire. The Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) was set-up by Roy Lynk and was fiercely critical of Scargill and the continuing strike.[74] Despite that stance, the working miners would have nothing to do with David Hart's NWMC, which they correctly identified as a front for government coercion.[75] Hart, who had originally coveted the support of the UDM, was not concerned. By February 1985, the goal of full confiscation of funds for the strikers was finally achieved. With the sequestration of funds completed, Hart wrote to Thatcher to boast of his own involvement, claiming that 'humiliation was at hand' for Scargill and the striking miners.[76]

By February 1985, with the strike all but defeated, Redwood announced that Thatcher and the private-sector loyalists within the DSPU were 'on the brink of a great victory, one even greater

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[67] Handwritten by Thatcher on report from Lamont on Soviet assistance to the NUM, 23rd November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[68] Untitled Report from Foreign Office, 18th January 1985, Norman Lamont, letter on Soviet assistance to the NUM, to Thatcher, 21st November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[69] M Steel to Colin Budd Assistant Private Secretary of the Foreign Office, 20th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, FCO28/6513.
[70] Michael Havers to Thatcher, 14th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1335.
[71] Ibid
[72] Untitled Letter from Law Officers to Thatcher, 18th February 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1579.
[73] Ibid
[74] Smith, *Actual Account*, p187.
[75] Ibid.
[76] David Hart, Report to Thatcher, 11th February 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1579.

than the Falklands, because the enemy within is so much harder to conquer.'[77] On the 3rd March 1985, the South Wales area called for a return to work on the condition that men sacked during the strike would be re-instated. However, the NCB knew that the miners' leaders were no longer in any position to negotiate. With its funds sequestered, the NUM could no longer fund striking miners. Faced with the stark choice of going hungry or returning to work, many miners had already, reluctantly, chosen the latter. As such, the return-to-work rate had increased exponentially since January. Safe in that knowledge, the NCB refused all concessions. On the 5th March, the NUM officially called the strike off. Some pits in Kent defied the return to work, but by the 6th of March, Redwood reported to Thatcher that 97% of miners were not on strike.[78]

After the defeat of the miners' strike, the four members of the DSPU were all rewarded well for their contributions. John Wybrew went back to Shell, where he was promoted to the position of director.[79] By the end of the 1980's, he was given an OBE.[80] He later moved to British Gas, which had been fully privatised whilst he was in the DSPU. David Pascall went back to BP. In 1987, Thatcher sold the government's last remaining shares in the company, worth £7.5-billion, to the Kuwait Investment Authority. A new post was created, for a director to oversee that transition to full privatisation. That director was David Pascall.[81] No comment was made on the seeming hypocrisy of 'privatising' BP by selling the shares to a company controlled by the Kuwaiti Government. Pascall received a CBE in 1992.[82] British Nuclear Fuel Chief, Peter Warry, was kept on by the Tory administration as a member of the 'deregulation taskforce' for the Department of Trade and Industry, helping to implement a raft of privatisation programs for the government. In the dying days of the Tory administration in 1996, he helped to oversee the full privatisation of nuclear power in the United Kingdom.[83] Perhaps the best-known former member of the DSPU is its leader, John Redwood. In 1987, the Policy Director was rewarded for his work by being made an MP in the safe Tory seat of Workingham. He was also promoted within NM Rothschild to the role of 'Head of

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[77] Redwood to Thatcher, February 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1579.
[78] DSPU report to Thatcher, 6th March 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1580.
[79] Untitled, Biography of John Wybrew from his later occupational website, *Emergent Capital Partners*, http://www.emergentcapitalpartners.com/our-board.html (Accessed 10th May 2019)
[80] Untitled, 'Birthday Honours, *the Independent*, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/birthday-honours-order-of-the-british-empire-obe-1998298.html (Accessed 10th May 2019).
[81] Untitled, 'David Pascall MBA' *Bloomberg.Com*, https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=2957020&privcapId=24884927&previousCapId=24884927&previousTitle=Royal%20Free%20Hospital Also Untitled, 'David Pascall' *University of Birmingham Website* 14th April 2015, https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/eps/eps-community/Alumni/alumni-profiles/Chemical/David-Pascall.aspx (Accessed both on 10th May 2019).
[82] Ibid.
[83] Untitled, 'Peter T Warry' *Bloomberg.Com*, https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=1276221&privcapId=24866077&previousCapId=256158029&previousTitle=British%20Business%20Bank%20PLC (Accessed 10th May 2019).

International Privatisation.'[84] Redwood later became a cabinet member, taking up the position of Secretary of State for Wales. He made a bid for the Tory leadership in 1995, but was defeated. When Tory David Cameron became Prime Minister in 2010, he offered Redwood a new role which he still holds to this day – co-chairman of the policy review group on economic competiveness. He claimed a second salary from NM Rothschild until at least 1989.[85] During their time in the DSPU, the private-sector loyalists had followed the Ridley Report and the central adherence to stealth. The writer of that report, Nicholas Ridley, remained in his Cabinet position of Secretary of State for Environment. For Ridley and others who might be aligned to Thatcher within the public sector, the private-sector loyalists had acted as fine exemplars of how to weaponise elements of the state apparatus against political opponents of the Prime Minister. The private-sector loyalists had seen no divide between party and state. No legitimisation was ever sought, granted nor needed. As long as stealth was adhered to, politically partisan activity was carried out with impunity.

Despite claiming salaries from companies in rival parts of the energy sector, Special Advisors David Pascall, John Wybrew and Peter Warry involved themselves in every aspect of the dispute and used the language of politically-aligned, Thatcher loyalists who viewed the miners' strike as a 'great opportunity' to inflict a defeat on the political opponents of the sitting Tory government. The leader of the DSPU, John Redwood, also viewed the strike as a 'political rather than an industrial' battle. At Orgreave in June and during the NACODS dispute in September, the government had successfully circumvented the two events which could have won the dispute for the NUM. New, more militaristic methods of policing suggested in the Ridley Report and implemented by the Thatcher government since 1979 had seen off another potential Saltley Gate at Orgreave – though Thatcher-aligned officers working within their own culture of conformity had used gratuitous violence in doing so. The country's constabularies had been altered considerably and the law courts had been leaned on – on advice from the DSPU. The Lord Chancellor's 'word to the wise,' despite his own earlier misgivings concerning 'elective dictatorship,' was another example of adherence to the culture of conformity evident within elements of the Thatcherite state. Politically-influenced state interference in the courts and police brutality at the picket-line can both be seen as evidence of the weaponisation of sections of the state apparatus during the strike. In another example, a financial pincer movement had been undertaken, attacking miners' personal finances through legislation and NUM funds through endless legal proceedings. The kernel of most of those ideas had been the Ridley Report of 1978 and its plan for an ideological and political attack on the trade unions – particularly the miners'

[84] Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, p299.
[85] Untitled, 'John Redwood Biography,' *All Souls College Oxford Online*, https://www.asc.ox.ac.uk/person/559Accessed 10th May 2019).

union. The basic ideas in that report had been fleshed-out and then implemented by the specifically-picked DSPU.

The weaponisation of sections of the state had taken place in line with the Ridley Report's overall instruction of adherence to stealth. In the aftermath of Orgreave, Thatcher chose to follow the advice of the DSPU, returning to the methods of stealth, despite calls from some Tory ministers for a full-publicity clash. During the NACODS dispute, Redwood's advice for the government to temporarily abandon inherent, ideological antagonism with trade unions and make a behind-the-scenes deal with the NACODS leadership at all costs had also been followed. The DSPU's loyalty to the Prime Minister and overtly political partisanship made the members an extreme example of the lack of distinction between party and state during the Thatcher tenure, and in response to the miners' strike. However, those private-sector loyalists were not the only example. Their adopted method - weaponisation under the cover of stealth – had also taken place within other areas of the state during the dispute – specifically in regard to Arthur Scargill.

Reflections on the Research Questions

The existence and activities of the DSPU offer an extreme example of the politicised state. Adherence to Thatcherism inside the unit was so pronounced as to be almost exaggerated at times. Private-sector loyalists such as Redwood and Pascall brought pre-existing ideological mores with them. Indeed, those loyalties explain their recruitment in the first place. Cultural norms such as the open espousal of political language became commonplace. The evidence used in this section suggested that Thatcher did not have to do much pressuring – the DSPU were committed Thatcherites and did not need to be convinced regarding issues of legitimacy concerning the weaponisation of the state apparatus. However, because the DSPU were private-sector loyalists, the evidence used in this section cannot tell us what effect Thatcher and the DSPU had on members of the permanent state active under Heath and highlighted in Part 1. The Home Office, MI5 and the police will be examined in Part 3. While Part 1 of this thesis established longstanding conservative biases within the state, the evidence here backs up Milne and Bloom's claims about the politicisation of the state specific to Thatcher and Thatcherism. The scale of the recruitment of private-sector loyalists and their interference in other parts of the state was something different to what had been seen before.

Part 3: The Central Intelligence Unit (The Leicester Unit)

Introduction

Over a six-month period during the miners' strike, the Home Office, MI5, Special Branch and the country's chief constables collaboratively weaponised elements of the state apparatus against a trade union leader at the behest of the sitting Prime Minister. In line with the stealth approach suggested by the DSPU, Thatcher had resisted calls for the arrest of Arthur Scargill in the aftermath of Orgreave. By mid-July, however, the Prime Minister had decided that she did want the NUM President prosecuted and asked senior civil servants, MI5 and the police to produce a 'dossier of evidence' to that end. The Central intelligence Unit (CIU – known as the Leicester Unit), was a secret collaborative effort which attempted to carry-out Thatcher's instruction by amassing that 'dossier of evidence.' From September 1984, Police Special Branches from 16 strike-bound forces collated information regarding picket-line activity and then sent that information to the Leicester Unit to be analysed in the hope of finding 'patterns and trends' which might denote the central, 'coordinating hand' of Scargill. If that was detected, then the NUM President could be charged with illegal secondary picketing. The data would also be analysed to try to link Scargill to other criminal activity on the picket-line. The scale of the operation against Scargill was so large, the Home Office had to finance a computer installed with a crime-analysis programme directly out of its own budget. The work of the Leicester Unit was highly secretive. Adherence to stealth was a constant theme for those involved. Those within the Leicester Unit were acutely aware of the partisan nature of their task. The Unit was set-up in response to pressure from above – as a response to the Prime Minister's stated aim to have Scargill prosecuted. That pressure from above combined with existing and longstanding political biases from some within those state agencies to create a collaborative, multi-agency weaponisation of sections of the state - carried out at the behest of the Prime Minister and normalised in the culture of conformity.

Chapter 8: 'A Thoroughly Thatcherised Satrapy': The Home Office and MI5

In the early months of the first Thatcher administration, the Prime Minister called the MI5 Director General, Howard Smith, to a meeting with her and the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw. Whitelaw told the MI5 chief that he had read all of the official MI5 reports concerning the so-called Winter of Discontent, the wave of strikes which had occurred six months before the Conservatives came to power. MI5 had produced detailed reports on leading trade unionists throughout that wave of industrial strife, though had concluded that the rank-and-file union members involved were not subversives, nor was the wave of strikes being organised to overthrow democracy. Because they were not subversives, it had been deemed by MI5 officers that the strikers were not appropriate targets for any specific counter-subversion. Although the Security Service's reports were based on first-hand surveillance, Whitelaw told the Director General that MI5's conclusions were incorrect, and that the Winter of Discontent had in fact shown 'marks of skilled and highly-coordinated direction' from some sort of central organising committee.[1] Before the Thatcher government, MI5's official definition of 'subversives' had come from the spy agency's charter of 1972. That is, 'those which threaten the safety or well-being of the state and are intending to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means.'[2] That definition was accepted by Heath, Wilson and Callaghan - the three Prime Ministers' prior to Thatcher.[3] Director-General Smith found the new Prime Minister unwilling to listen to MI5 appraisals that 'subversion' was declining in Britain by 1980.[4] He filed an internal report which said that 'Mrs Thatcher assumes a greater role and influence on the part of the Communist Party and the Trotskyists in the trade union and industrial fields than they did in fact enjoy.'[5] According to Smith, Thatcher had highlighted her belief in the existence of what she called the 'wreckers,' who were working behind the scenes at the top of the trade union movement to undermine the new Tory government. When Smith offered an opinion that this was not the case, the MI5 man was snubbed.

In December 1979, Thatcher called a meeting at Chequers with ideologically-aligned minsters to discuss how best to react to the 'wreckers,' and to 'consider action to counter hostile forces working for industrial unrest.'[6] After Smith's questioning of the existence of those wreckers, neither he nor any other MI5 officers were invited to attend. Instead, Thatcher invited her private-sector loyalists such as Victor Rothschild, as well as Thatcher-appointed senior civil servants such as

[1] Christopher Andrew*. The Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of M15 (St Ives: Penguin 2010),* p670.
[2] Ibid, p667.
[3] Ibid, p670.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid, p671.

Robert Armstrong. As the vice-President of the Economic League and the chief executive of the family business *NM Rothschild*, the city bank which would later second Redwood to the DSPU, Rothschild was representative of the private-sector loyalists favoured by the new Prime Minister.[7] Armstrong, however, had spent most of his working life within the public sector.

Robert Armstrong was a senior civil servant who had been involved in the Heath-led Subversion Home Committee (SHC) in 1972.[8] From as far back as his days as a member of the SHC, Armstrong had been regarded as industrious and ambitious by those whom he worked with. The civil servant's membership of the original SHC meant that he had longstanding ties with MI5 officers, who were well aware of Armstrong's equally-longstanding desire for the coveted position of Cabinet Secretary.[9] After Thatcher's election victory in 1979, he got his wish. The Prime Minister was known for her non-toleration of dissenting opinion and liked to surround herself with trusted, ideologically-aligned advisors.[10] She personally picked the former SHC man for the role.[11] Around the same time, Thatcher's press secretary Bernard Ingham recalled that Thatcher's attitude towards MI5 and other members of the permanent state (other than those who, like Armstrong, she had appointed personally) was less than sympathetic, and that the new Prime Minister 'wanted them to know who was boss.'[12] With access to and good-standing with both Thatcher and several MI5 officers, Armstrong could act as a key mediator. Given the subject up for discussion at the Chequers meeting, it seems possible that Armstrong told Thatcher about the work of the SHC in the 1970s. In any case, one idea that came out of the meeting was for a new counter-subversion unit to begin operating, though initially much smaller in scale than the 1972 model. The Cabinet Office Unit (COU) would be manned by a single MI5 officer under the supervision of Armstrong himself. That would allow the Security Service to come back into the fold – as long as the officer provided was willing to comply with Thatcher's directives – via Armstrong. Those directives would be similar to those of the SHC, the last time the Tories had been in power. Duties would include the distribution of propaganda against 'subversives,' the compiling of blacklists, and carrying out other counter-subversion operations on behalf of the sitting Tory government. The MI5 officer chosen for the role was John Deverell.[13] Keen to deploy the same stealth as the SHC had in 1972, Armstrong advised senior Tories to exercise

[7] For full history of the Economic League, see Mike Hughes. *Spies at Work: The Definitive History of the Economic League* (London: Lulu 2012).
[8] Robert Armstrong, as Cabinet Secretary, reminisces about his previous role during a meeting in 1985, Record of Meeting between Armstrong, Jones of MI5 and other civil servants, 15th January 1985, *The National Archives Kew*, CAB301/484.
[9] Peter Wright. *Spycatcher* (New York: Viking Penguin 1988), p352.
[10] Simon Jenkins. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane 2007), p107.
[11] Wright, *Spycatcher*, p352.
[12] Bernard Ingram quoted in Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p10.
[13] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War,* p10.

caution against any exposure of Deverell's activities. The Home Secretary, William Whitelaw agreed, though seemed upbeat about the 'political angles to be explored' by Deverell's work.[14] Deverell was to have a significant impact.

Deverell's counter-subversion techniques were instrumental in the 'Red Robbo/ British Leyland' affair. In August 1983, British Leyland sacked thirteen members, including Derek 'Red Robbo' Robertson, for being members of left-wing 'subversive' organisations. As his nickname suggested, Robertson was regarded by many, including Thatcher, as a notorious agitator.[15] The Amalgamated Engineering Union (AUEW) had threatened strike action. Unknown to the union, Robertson had held a series of meetings with Midlands-based members of the Communist Party of Great Britain, all of which were secretly taped by MI5. Anonymously, Deverell sent copies of the recordings to British Leyland Chairman Michael Edwardes who, in turn, passed them on to AUEW President Terry Duffy. Duffy called off the strike. Keith Joseph told Armstrong to direct MI5 to engage in further use of the 'brown envelope technique' (the tapes were delivered in an anonymous brown envelope). Deverell may well have had more opportunities to use the technique. The Home Office was able to tell Thatcher in 1984 that his activities had had a 'significant and beneficial impact on the course of events.'[16] Joseph asked whether Deverell could not just pass information straight on to other company bosses, as he had with British Leyland. However, Deverell warned Armstrong about possible breaches of MI5's Charter. Instead, Joseph was satisfied that the Home Office and Deverell could make the same recommendation as the SHC had in 1972 – by directing the employers directly to the Economic League.[17] Through Deverell and his work MI5 had proven its worth, and its willingness to conform, to Thatcher. Seven months after the riots, in February 1982, Armstrong wrote to the Prime Minister to tell her that, in light of Deverell's work with the Cabinet Secretary, MI5 had produced a report concerning possible targets in other areas – including in response to the previous summer's riots. The report warned that 'subversive groups have exploited the aftermath of last summer's civil disturbances.'[18] Three days later, Thatcher's Principal Private Secretary Clive Whitmore wrote a reply to confirm that 'the Prime Minister was very interested [in any details of] exploitation by subversive groups.'[19]

Despite Thatcher's earlier snub, MI5 was not known for having a relaxed attitude towards subversion. Speaking at the time of the *Spycatcher affair* in 1987, ex-Labour Home Secretary Roy

[14] Ibid, p671.
[15] Ibid, p672.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Cabinet Secretary Robert Armstrong to Margaret Thatcher, 19th February 1982, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[19] Clive Whitmore PM's Office to Armstrong, 22nd February 1982, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.

Jenkins drew on his own experience as head of the Home Office to say that he had always believed MI5 to be a poor choice of agency, in dealing with 'subversion.'[20] As Jenkins put it, 'an organisation of people who lived in the fevered world of espionage and counter-espionage [was] entirely unfitted to judge between what is subversion and what is legitimate dissent.'[21] Those whose day-to-day lives were often a battle with the KGB were likely to see subversion even when it was not there. Nevertheless, Thatcher had visibly alienated the organisation for questioning the existence of the wreckers. Rather than offering the Prime Minister unquestioned agreement, Director General Smith had offered evidence-based disagreement -but it was disagreement nevertheless. The Chequers snub might well have made Smith's position untenable. Although he carried on until 1981, Home Secretary Whitelaw had been openly sourcing a replacement.[22] Smith's successor would need to be someone who was less concerned with issues of constitutionality and more politically-aligned to the Thatcherite project – 'one of us' to use Thatcher's oft-used phrase.

In 1981, the right man was found. The new Director General of the Security Service would be John Jones. Like Armstrong, Jones had been a member of the Subversion Home Committee in 1972. Shortly after the appointment of Jones, MI5 began sending lists of subversives directly to Thatcher, at the Prime Minister's request. Seven leading members of the Greenham Common Peace Camp, set-up in 1981 by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), had detailed files compiled against their names. Jones was asked to provide 'dirt' on the women after Thatcher herself had announced her belief that the Greenham women were colluding with the Soviet Union – an accusation which the MI5 chief knew to be preposterous.[23] The 'dirt' was handed over regardless. Under the new Director-General, MI5 had proved itself to be much more amiable to the Prime Minister's world-view – particularly concerning subversion.

Thatcher had installed loyalists and ex-SHC members into the positions of Cabinet Secretary and Director-General of MI5. In 1983, after the Tories' second election victory and first landslide, she began to fill Cabinet positions with her supporters. When Nicholas Ridley was promoted to Environment, another ally, Leon Brittan, was made Home Secretary. Brittan was a committed and outspoken Thatcherite.[24] During the early months of the miners' strike, he denounced the striking

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[20] The Spycatcher Affair – *Spycatcher* was a book written by former MI5 officer Peter Wright. It was published first in Australia in 1987. Its allegations proved scandalous on publication, but more so because the British Government attempted to ban it, ensuring its profit and notoriety.
[21] Roy Jenkins quoted in Richard Norton-Taylor. *In Defence of the Realm?: The Case for Accountable Security Services* (London Civil Liberties Trust 1990), p30.
[22] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p555.
[23] Ibid, p674.
[24] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), p180.

miners as 'anarchists.'[25] The Home Secretary was fond of giving television interviews in which he would insinuate that miners arrested at picket-lines would be charged with riot – which, he was keen to point out, carried a possible life sentence.[26] Before Jones' appointment, MI5 had fallen foul of the Prime Minister by analysing trade unionists' behaviour during the Winter of Discontent, applying that behaviour to the existing definitions of subversion in their own charter, and concluding that the strikers were not subversives. Brittan had a different approach. If striking miners were not subversives because they kept within the law, then perhaps the definition of 'subversion' needed to be changed.[27] Labour MP John Prescott wrote to Brittan at the end of 1984 to express his concerns that some striking miners, who did not appear to be breaking any laws, were being targeted for state-sponsored counter-subversion such as surveillance and phone-tapping - at the hands of MI5. Prescott pointed out that these men had committed no crime. Brittan defended the actions of the Security Service. He replied that unlike 1972,'the definition [of subversion] is not limited to possible acts of a criminal nature. In an open society such as ours, it is all too easy to use tactics which are not themselves unlawful for subversive ends.'[28] Under MI5's definition of the term, subversion was synonymous with the overthrow of democracy – a criminal act. Under the new definition, adherence with the law could be passed-off as a tactical measure, undertaken by subversives to throw off the security apparatus. During the miners' strike, Thatcher had constantly pointed to Scargill's refusal to call a ballot as anti-democratic and would later, in her July 1984 'enemy within speech,' call all miners 'a scar across the country' and a threat to democracy.[29] The Prime Minister's speech linked Scargill and the miners to subversion via the old definition. Under the new definition, however, Scargill and other NUM leaders could be subversives in any case – whether they had broken the law and intended to overthrow democracy – or not.

In March 1984, Brittan visited MI5 headquarters at Leconfield House in central London. The Home Secretary was introduced to the Security Service's recently promoted Assistant Director of Counter Subversion, Stella Rimington. Rimington was seen as something of a high-flier within MI5. Despite being part of an organisation that she herself described as old-fashioned and male-dominated, she had become only the second female ever to reach the level of Assistant Director.[30] During his visit, the new Home Secretary made clear his new interpretation of subversion, and also

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[25] Leon Brittan, Cabinet Meeting, 22nd March 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB128/78.
[26] Gareth Peirce in Battle For Orgreave. Dir. Yvette Vanson. Prod. Vanson Wardle and Channel 4. *Youtube*. Uploaded 5th Feb. 2012. Viewed 4 Oct. 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dn7DZSagDI4 (Original 1985).
[27] Leon Brittan, Cabinet Meeting, 22nd March 1984, TNA Kew, CAB128/78.
[28] Leon Brittan note to John Prescott, cited in Norton-Taylor, *In Defence of the Realm?*, p31.
[29] Margaret Thatcher, 'Speech to the 1922 Committee: the Enemy Within,' 19th July 1984, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105563
[30] Stella Rimington. *Open Secret* (London: Arrow 2002), p101, p159.

his expectations that MI5 should follow his lead in terms of the new definition. Rimington was constitutionally-bound to MI5's own definition of the term. However, the MI5 officer revealed how the organisation had justified the handing-over of the information on the Greenham women to Thatcher. Although CND was a legitimate and legal organisation, MI5 knew that the Soviet Union had targeted the pressure group – in the hope of undermining a nuclear rival from within.[31] Viewed from that perspective, Rimington would later reflect, CND became a 'legitimate target' – despite not being a subversive organisation in of itself.[32] This was the same rhetoric that the private-sector loyalists of the DSPU had used when justifying Foreign Office involvement in the miners' strike. In regard to non-criminal subversives involved in the strike, Rimington told Brittan that 'we will accumulate information and…pass it to Whitehall, but then it is up to you.'[33] While this was much less than a ringing endorsement of the new interpretation of subversion, neither was it a protest against government pressure to carry out operations against those who would not have been classed as subversives under the old definition.

Brittan was able to single-handedly change the definition of subversion, and order others within the state to accept it, because of a legal grey area surrounding the terminology. There was no definition of 'subversion' in English law.[34] Journalist Norton-Taylor claimed to have seen it in Special Branch manuals and it was also in the aforementioned MI5 Charter. Nevertheless, the actual meaning of the term was open to subjective interpretation and, arguably in the case of Brittan, purposeful manipulation. It was that legal leeway that had allowed the Home Secretary to change the meaning to one more fitting with his own ideological mores and more beneficial to the Prime Minister's own belief that 'wreckers' were running the trade unions. In April 1984, a few weeks after the start of the strike, the Commons Home Affairs Committee happened to be holding an inquiry into Special Branch, during which the definition of 'subversive' was brought up. During the inquiry, John Alderson, the former Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, told MPs that 'some [Special Branch] officers have a much wider understanding of the term 'subversive' than others. To some, all activists may be subversive, and both individuals and groups critical of the established order are marked out for surveillance and recording.'[35] Alderson's statement, which was made one month after Brittan's visit to MI5 headquarters, revealed how the Home Secretary's re-imagining of 'subversion' was able to permeate the police and security service. However, the speed of that

[31] Ibid, 163.
[32] Ibid
[33] Ibid, p677.
[34] Norton-Taylor, *In Defence of the Realm?,* p29.
[35] Chief Constable John Alderson quoted in Norton-Taylor, *In Defence of the Realm?*, p29.

permeation might be said to reveal that many within the state's security apparatus needed little encouragement to adopt Brittan's new way of thinking.

Many MI5 officers were ex-military men (and occasionally women). Some tended to view democratic politics with distaste, suspicion and even hostility, particularly towards the Labour Party.[36] Guy Burgess, one of the Cambridge Spy Ring, claimed that the reason he and his fellow defectors were able to go undetected for so long was because of inherent class-biases within the organisation.[37] All four spies were upper-class Oxbridge graduates who spoke in Received Pronunciation. As the 'right sort,' they were, for a long time, above suspicion.[38] Rather than the British state or the British people, newly recruited officers would profess their loyalty to the nebulous entity known as 'the Crown.'[39] Though MI5 reported nominally to the Home Office (along with GCHQ and Special Branch, while MI6 reported nominally to the Foreign Office), none of those agencies were officially bound to anybody and often acted as independent wings of the permanent state.[40]

Officer Charles Elwell, a veteran of the Security Service who was due to retire at the time of the incoming Thatcher government, wrote a message to the Director General in May 1979 to warn that, for him, 'the communist threat has become more insidious because of the blurring of the edges between communism and democratic socialism.'[41] Elwell's comments might be said to reflect the longstanding charges laid against MI5 and the other security agencies that those organisations held highly-partisan biases in favour of the Conservative Party, with many of their members holding an accompanying, deep-seated antagonism toward the Labour Party, which, as Elwell's letter reveals, was often tarred with the same ideological brush as the Security Service's international foes, the Communist Soviet Union. Michael Hanley, Smith's predecessor as the Director General of MI5 between 1972 and 1978, often spoke positively about Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath, but was scathing about both of Heath's successors, Harold Wilson and Jim Callaghan. Hanley denied that the targets for his derision were chosen because, unlike Heath, they were Labour Premiers. He

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[36] Ralph Miliband. *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (Aylesbury: Quartet Books 1974), p116.

[37] The Cambridge Spy Ring - A ring of British double agents who passed information to the Soviet Union. Based in Cambridge University, most of its members were eventually uncovered and fled to the USSR in the 1950s and 1960s. Several, including Burgess, were employed by MI5 – making it a scandal for the organisation and its recruitment processes.

[38] Toffs, Queers and Traitors: The Extraordinary Life of Guy Burgess. Dir. George Carey. Prod, Teresa Cherfas and BBC Four. *BBC i-Player*, 13th November 2017. Viewed 4th April 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09fz33h

[39] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p17.

[40] Ibid, p19.

[41] Andrew, *In Defence of the Realm*, p668.

later claimed that 'I'm not anti-Labour, but I thought they were [both] amateurish.'[42] However, it could certainly be argued that an animosity seemed to exist between the government and the Security Service when Labour was in power, which would dissipate during Tory terms of office. Wilson in particular was convinced that MI5 were spying on him and taping his conversations. As discussed, he was probably correct. During his last weeks in office, the Labour Prime Minister had taken to pointing at the ceiling if anyone tried to engage him in conversation, even in the lavatory.[43] Wilson's DSPU Policy Director, Bernard Donoghue, believed that the agency had tapped his phone as well. Wilson claimed that Hanley admitted to him, off the record, that MI5 'did contain a disaffected faction with extreme right-wing views' who were probably guilty of the espionage Wilson accused them of, though they were acting outside of official policy.[44] Hanley later denied his confession.

When Hanley was earmarked for replacement in 1978 by then Labour Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, the MI5 man was furious to hear that the moderate Howard Smith was to be his replacement. Upon hearing the news, the outgoing MI5 Director-General took the unprecedented step of visiting the leader of the opposition, Margaret Thatcher. Hanley was glowing about Thatcher, and later wrote in his memoirs that 'I met Maggie and poured out my woes. I think she took note of one or two things…I was very frank.'[45] That closeness between the agency and the Conservative Party was mirrored by the continuing hostility shown by MI5 towards Labour. In February 1980, with Thatcher now in government, *The Observer* exposed the tapping of the phones of three Labour MPs, Neil Kinnock, Michael Meacher and Bob Cryer.[46] In July 1980, the Post Office Engineering Union (POEU), went public to voice concerns that several Post Office employees were being ordered by the 'relevant agency' to carry out the technical work of phone tapping often against people who seemed to have committed no crime other than trade union membership or affiliation with the Labour Party.[47] In 1981, however, Smith had been replaced by John Jones – Member of the SHC in 1972, ally of Thatcher confidante Armstrong and a man personally selected by the then Home Secretary, Whitelaw.[48] The MI5 hierarchy seemed much less antagonistic about Conservative meddling in their managerial structures to remove Smith than they had been about the Labour meddling of 1978 which had instated him.

Jones' tenure as Director-General was marked by a series of damaging whistleblowing episodes by former officers, which brought the agency, and its alleged political biases, to public

[42] Ibid, p552.
[43] Ibid, p639.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid, p553.
[46] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p22.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Andrew, *In Defence of the Realm*, p555.

attention. Miranda Ingram went public after being forced to 'engage in acts of dubious legality' by 'monitoring one's fellow citizens.'[49] Ingram highlighted what she called a 'prevailing right-wing atmosphere' where an 'officer who dissents from the official line does not feel encouraged to voice his concerns. He feels that it will be futile or detrimental to his career.'[50] Ingram later claimed that MI5 was a reactionary and conservative organisation, almost comically so, to the degree that 'anyone wearing jeans was seen as a possible subversive.'[51] Michael Bettaney was a rogue MI5 officer who was arrested and jailed after being found guilty of being a Soviet double-agent. In his April 1984 trial, Bettaney publicly railed against the agency, which he said 'cynically manipulates the definition of subversion and thus abuses the provision of its charter so as to investigate and interfere in the activities of legitimate political parties, the trade union movement and other progressive organisations.'[52] Bettaney claimed that it was MI5's extreme political partisanship which had led to his attempted defection. Although Thatcher's Chequers snub toward the previous Director General and Brittan's changed definition of subversion might be examples of pressure from above on MI5 officers to conform to the Thatcherite project, the whisleblowers' comments reveal a pre-existing, deeply-conservative organisation whose membership needed little persuasion to comply.

Whilst MI5 could denounce Bettaney's claims as the rhetoric of a Soviet double agent, they could not so easily brush off Ingram's similar criticism, when Ingram seemed to have no obvious axe to grind. Moreover, a third whistleblower, Cathy Massiter, came forward with a series of similar allegations on a Channel 4 documentary which was broadcast nationwide in 1985. Massiter's claims echoed the sentiments of the others. She claimed to have left the agency because it had been 'violating the rules against political bias' by launching politically-motivated surveillance operations against members of the CND and Labour MPs Harriet Harman and Patricia Hewitt.[53] MI5's justification for monitoring the Labour MP's was that they were members of the perfectly legal organisation, the National Council for Civil Liberties. Massiter rejected the notion that this made them 'subversives' worthy of state spying. The whistle-blowers depicted an organisation defined by deep-rooted conservative biases. If Thatcher was to target 'the wreckers,' MI5 might have seemed like a good organisation to lead the way, now that the Thatcher-aligned Jones was the Director General. Moreover, the organisation had been keeping files on senior miners' leaders for decades.

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[49] Ibid, p558.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Untitled, 'It wasn't just the unions the Hairies had in their sights,' *the Independent* 26th October 2002, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/it-wasnt-just-the-unions-the-hairies-had-in-their-sights-141122.html
[52] Untitled, '20/20 Vision, MI5's Official Secrets (Channel 4 1985), Hugo Young & Cathy Massiter,' *Youtube*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qRuAzSDhZXk (Accessed 28th March 2019)
[53] Ibid.

The Security Service had engaged in heavy espionage and surveillance against the NUM since the previous miners' strike in 1972 - when Margaret Thatcher had been a junior minister. Mick McGahey, NUM Area Co-Ordinator for Scotland, had his phone tapped, just as he would twelve years later. During both strikes, the MI5 officers assigned to listen to him would report having trouble understanding his thick Glasweigan accent.[54] In 1972, Heath's SHC industrial subgroup produced a blacklist of those deemed 'most likely to become involved in subversion.'[55] One of the people identified by the SHC was the young NUM Yorkshire Area organiser. That was MI5's first file on Arthur Scargill.[56] In 1984, Thatcher repeatedly identified Scargill as the person she believed was the lead wrecker.[57] However, Thatcher's claims were not based on the evidence provided by MI5. Security Service officers were well-aware of the inaccuracy of Thatcher's claim. An MI5 Director's meeting on the 13th March indicated that, according to the agencies' own evidence, 'there did not appear to be any significant subversive involvement [in the strike].'[58] A report from the 4th April, from the same Director, revealed that 'subversive organisations were not making a significant impact on events.'[59]

Despite the fact that they knew that they were carrying out operations against non-subversives, MI5 officers were now operating within the culture of conformity. As such, they continued to commit acts of counter-subversion against the NUM's leaders. Carole Massiter, the officer who later went public, revealed that Scargill would 'occasionally shout abuse into the phone at the people who were tapping him' whilst agents assigned to listen to McGahey would complain about having to listen to hours of private and not particularly useful conversations between Mrs McGahey and her family members.[60] Stella Rimington later stated that she had to 'agonize' over the decision to keep up the surveillance against Scargill, since all of the evidence pointed to the fact that he was not a communist and was acting perfectly within the law.[61] However, MI5 had been reprimanded by the Prime Minister under the previous Director General for offering evidence-based opinions which appeared at odds with Thatcher's 'wreckers' stance. Those within the organisation now understood that the new Prime Minister represented something different to what had gone before. The Security Service was not being asked, but was rather being told by Thatcher that Scargill was a subversive.

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[54] Andrew, *In Defence of the Realm*, p593.
[55] Ibid, p597.
[56] Ibid, p598.
[57] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), p3.
[58] Andrew, *In Defence of the Realm*, p676.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid, p677.
[61] Ibid.

Despite that pressure from above, Rimington was personally taken with the Prime Minister – another woman who had achieved high status in a male-dominated field. During the mid-1970s, MI5's Leconfield House had also been the base of the Ministry of Education. During one of Thatcher's visits as Prime Minister in the 1980s, she discovered that Rimington's office was the same one that she had inhabited when she was Minister of Education under Heath.[62] In her autobiography, Rimington said that the revelation left her both proud, but also mortified.[63] The MI5 officers were so enamoured by Thatcher, they would practice mixing drinks before her arrival - desperate that every single detail of the Prime Minister's visit would be perfect.[64] An occasion when Thatcher sent back a glass of whisky for being too weakly mixed was spoken about in shamed tones by MI5 officers for years afterwards.[65] In regard to Scargill, Rimington used the same justification that she had used when the counter-subversion division had passed along the 'dirt' on the Greenham women. Although the NUM was a legal and legitimate organisation, and the vast majority of miners were not subversives, reflected the Assistant Director, 'a triumvirate' at the head of the organisation was intent on overthrowing Thatcher.[66] As such, those at the top of the miners' union were subversives. With that, the MI5 Officer sanctioned the continued surveillance of the NUM President – to be maintained throughout the rest of the strike.[67]

A monolithic part of the public sector at-odds with the Thatcherites' anti-statist credentials, the civil service, and those that worked within it, were nominally duty-bound to serve whichever political party was in power, without displaying any political biases of their own. During the first Thatcher tenure, between 1979 and 1983, the Prime Minister had been openly hostile toward - and displayed a fierce aversion to - the civil servants which she had inherited from the previous Labour administration.[68] Their stated commitment to impartiality, however strictly or loosely enforced, had set the civil service at odds with Thatcher's private-sector loyalists drafted into the DSPU. In 1979 Thatcher's first DSPU Policy Director, John Hoskyns, wrote a paper which argued that Thatcher should implement large-scale cuts to the entire sector which would 'de-privilege the civil service' with immediate effect.[69] Many civil servants railed against the DSPU's assertion. Ian Bancroft told Thatcher that it was 'absolute nonsense to tell a 20-year-old girl working in a DHSS office in Merseyside that she was privileged.'[70] Backed-up by her DSPU loyalists, Thatcher retorted that 'we

[62] Rimington, *Open Secret,* p160.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid, p198-199.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid, p163.
[67] Andrew, *Defence of the Realm*, p677.
[68] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p107.
[69] Peter Hennessy. *Whitehall* (Glasgow: Fontana 1990), p628.
[70] Ibid, p633.

have several friends in the private-sector who could do the job better.'[71] Another senior civil servant, Donald Drex, had a face-to-face argument with Thatcher in which he dismissed the DSPU report and told the Prime Minister that she and her private-sector loyalists were wrong.[72] In response, Drex was widely believed to have gotten a black mark against his name - and appeared to be overlooked for future promotions.[73]

Thatcher and her private-sector loyalists considered themselves an 'alternative civil service.'[74] Alan Walters, Victor Rothschild and the DSPU members were all allowed to attend ministerial meetings, while senior civil servants were not – unlike under previous Prime Ministers.[75] While some civil servants were at odds with Thatcher and the DSPU, some appeared ideologically-aligned with the new Prime Minister. One of these was Derek Rayner. In 1979, Thatcher went with the DSPU's recommendation and appointed Rayner to the role of Head of the Civil Service.[76] On the Prime Minister's orders, Rayner formed and led 'the Efficiency Unit' - a group of Thatcher-aligned senior civil servants in Whitehall which was tasked with 'lead[ing] a crusade against waste and inefficiency in the civil service.'[77] Rayner and his team, labelled 'the Scrutineers,' were feared by rank-and-file civil servants as they went about different parts of the sector identifying people and areas to be cut. Rayner and his team reported directly to the private-sector loyalists of the DSPU and through them, to Thatcher.[78] The Scrutineers referred to Thatcher as 'she who must be obeyed.'[79] By December 1982, they had produced £170 million of savings and axed 16,000 jobs.[80] The Scrutineers continued to operate throughout the Thatcher tenure. By December 1984, they had a full-time team of nine members and produced regular reports for Redwood and the DSPU.[81]

As with the Security Service, senior civil servants such as those employed by the Home Office swore their allegiance to the crown.[82] Many of those recruited for senior roles within Whitehall came from a specific milieu - having a shared education level and coming from the same social class.[83] As well as educational and class ties, such men, whose daily jobs involved being deeply

[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, p634.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid, p658.
[75] Ibid, p649.
[76] Ibid, p594.
[77] Ibid, p592.
[78] Ellen Flannigan, Machinery of Government Division to Redwood, 10th December 1984, *TNA*, PREM19/2076.1
[79] Hennessey, *Whitehall*, p596.
[80] Ibid, p598.
[81] Ellen Flannigan, Machinery of Government Division to Redwood, 10th December 1984, *TNA*, PREM19/2076.1
[82] Extracts from Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code (Issued September 1984), Copy issued with the SPL's Second Report, 16 February 1987, *TNA Kew*, CA301/486.
[83] Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, p111.

immersed in public affairs and determining policy, were not likely to be free of shared ideological inclinations and conservative biases.[84] Moreover, before their appointment to the role, each would have been subject to screening and security checks – carried out by people of the same social class and political allegiance.[85] In 1963, Labour Cabinet Member Richard Crossman had criticised the permanent civil service in Whitehall and said that a successful left-wing government was not possible in Britain, unless many within the permanent state were replaced.[86]

Despite those pre-existing biases, however, Thatcher had not been satisfied. After the first landslide in 1983, the Prime Minister and the DSPU changed their policy toward the now-streamlined civil service. As Prime Minister, Thatcher was personally responsible for the appointment of the top two levels of civil servant – permanent secretaries and their deputies.[87] Using her oft-used phrase 'is he one of us?,' between 1979 and 1985, 43 permanent secretaries and 138 deputies departed Whitehall and were replaced by those seen as ideologically sound – virtually a complete turnover.[88] Power was consolidated among the Prime Minister's trusted loyalists. Robert Armstrong, the Prime Minister's hand-picked Cabinet Secretary, took over Rayner's role as the Head of the Civil Service. The move toward consolidation led the *Guardian's* political commentator, Hugo Young, to warn that Britain was now home to a 'politicised civil service,' the upper-grades of which resembled a 'thoroughly Thatcherised satrapy.'[89] One of the few non-Thatcherites to survive the purge was Douglas Wass, the permanent secretary for the Treasury. In April 1986, Wass warned that the biggest losers in a politicised state were likely to be the ministers themselves.[90] He gave two examples - Kenneth Stowe, Thatcher's new Principal Private Secretary and Clive Whitmore, appointed to Defence - as men hired exclusively because they had passed the 'one-of-us' test.[91] The recruitment of a raft of civil servants who had Thatcher to thank for their positions created a culture within departments where much depended on the leader's will.[92] Despite the anti-statist credentials of Thatcherism as an ideology, the Prime Minister needed the conservative-orientated state to face

[84] Ibid, p108.
[85] Ibid, p111.
[86] Peter Oborne. *The Triumph of the Political Class* (London: Pocket Books 2007), p116.
[87] Hennessey, *Whitehall*, p637.
[88] Ibid, p635.
[89] Hugo Young, 'The convictions which will not serve the full term,' *The Guardian Archive*, 21st July 1987, https://search-proquest-com.edgehill.idm.oclc.org/publicationissue/1D43B03C72CA4A2BPQ/$B/1/The+Guardian+$281959-2003$29$3b+London+$28UK$29/01987Y07Y21$23Jul+21,+1987/$N?accountid=10671 (Accessed 13th July 2019)
[90] Hennessey, *Whitehall*, p636.
[91] Ibid, p636 & 641.
[92] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p110.

down her enemies including the NUM in general, parts of the public sector, and Scargill personally.[93] The Home Office became a vital part of the chain of command, linking Thatcher with those loyal to her in other parts of the state such as the police and the Security Service.

[93] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p10.

Chapter 9: 'National Picketing Coordinators': The Home Office, ACPO and Special Branch

A month before Orgreave, in May, picketing Kent miners had taken over the regional NUM headquarters, Hobart House. Upon hearing of the action, Thatcher told the Kent Chief Constable in a phone call that 'Scargill should now be arrested and charged.'[1] In the direct aftermath of Orgreave in June, however, the DSPU had warned the Prime Minister that arresting the NUM President directly after that widely-viewed event might make him a martyr. By late July, Thatcher had abandoned that post-Orgreave caution and decided that she wanted her political and personal enemy to be prosecuted. That month, she wrote letters to two senior civil servants within the Home Office, Roy Harrington and David Hilary, to let them know that she expected them to get involved in initiating charges against Scargill, and to enlist the help of the police.

Harrington was the head of the Home Office's counterterrorism unit – F4 Division.[2] Harrington and F4 were usually charged with overseeing the state's responses to the IRA.[3] Hilary was the Home Office Police Department Chairman.[4] On 24th July Hilary wrote to his superior and Deputy Undersecretary of State Michael Partridge to say that, as he and Harrington understood it, 'the Prime Minister was really interested in the compilation of some kind of dossier of evidence that would enable a charge of conspiracy to be made against someone for organising violent picketing.'[5] There was little doubt as to whom Hilary was referring. He continued that the 'Director of Public Prosecutions has said that there is insufficient evidence [at the present moment] to prosecute Mr Scargill.'[6] Scargill was not facing prosecution because no evidence had been found to link him to any serious criminality. The NUM President was a divisive figure, but the union was a legal organisation and Scargill had been democratically elected as its leader. His animosity toward Thatcher might previously have been passed off as opposition to the governing party – rather than opposition to the British state. Harington and Hilary responded to the Prime Minister's request by agreeing to develop plans to supply the 'dossier of evidence' which might be used against Scargill. Hilary revealed that he had already enlisted the South Yorkshire Police Chief Constable, Peter Wright, to that end. Wright had deployed a Chief Superintendent to 'watch Scargill's activities.'[7] The CS had been told by Wright

[1] Internal note, Prime Minister's Office, May 84, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623.
[2] Richard Aldrich & Lewis Herrington, 'Secrets, hostages, and ransoms: British kidnap policy in historical perspective,' *Review of International Studies* Vol. 44. 4 (April 2018), pp. 738–759.
[3] Ibid.
[4] David Hilary to Michael Partridge, F4 Division Memo, 24th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid AND Roy Harrington to Hugh Taylor, 16th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/899/2.

to look for the 'coordinating hand' of Scargill in regard to picketing or criminal behaviour.[8] Specifically, to 'keep an eye on Mr Scargill's activities in order to continually assess the available information with a view to possible prosecution.'[9] Harrington had also asked the Director of Public Prosecutions about the likelihood of Scargill's conviction if arrested. The Director had again replied that the existing evidence was insufficient.[10] Despite that, CC Wright had assured Harrington that his force was 'well aware of the coordinating hand of Mr Scargill in organising disorder at particular places.'[11] However, conceded Wright, there was 'no immediate prospect of prosecution or any serious charges.'[12] More work was needed, and perhaps more than one regional force would need to be included, if the Home Office was to succeed in producing Thatcher's 'dossier of evidence' against Scargill. Such enlistment would need to take place with the upmost secrecy. Harrington and Hilary were aware that their task might be difficult to legitimise if exposed to the public. No legitimisation would be required, however, if the Home Office adhered to stealth. The civil servants would need to enlist more chief constables to the cause – though Wright and the Chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) David Hall, who had both been made aware of the Prime Minister's directive, had already been reminded of the 'sensitive' nature of the task.[13]

As discussed, Scargill had been instrumental in organising the massive, strike-defining Saltley Gate picket in 1972. Also discussed previously, the years between 1972 and 1984 saw the militarisation of Britain's police forces which was to prove decisive at Orgreave, while many rank-and-file police felt politically-aligned to Thatcher's perceived hard-stance on crime. For Britain's most senior policemen – the chief constables, conservative-leanings appeared to stretch back much further. Since the mid-1970s, many of Britain's chief constables appeared to become more and more associated with the law and order lobby and, later, the abrasive policies of the Thatcher government.[14]

In April 1976, a women-led strike took place at the Grunwick factory involving workers who were striking for the right to form a trade union. The pickets soon realised that a 'special relationship' existed between the Grunwick management and senior officers. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Robert Mark, announced publicly that the Grunwick management had

[8] Roy Harrington to Hugh Taylor, both Home Office, 16th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/899/2.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Clive Emsley. *The English Police: A Political and Social History (Harlow: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1996),* p179.

'courageously and successfully stood firm against politically motivated violence.'[15] In his book released in 1978, Mark had even stronger words for the Shrewsbury pickets. In 1973, the police charged 24 flying pickets in the construction industry with conspiracy. Some had been given what appeared to be excessive jail terms, including three years for Des Warren and two for Ricky Tomlinson. The jailed construction workers continued to maintain, to the present day, that they were jailed because of their political beliefs and because they had demonstrated successful picketing techniques.[16] Commissioner Mark argued that the pickets had 'committed the worse of all crimes – even worse than murder – the attempt to achieve an industrial or political objective by criminal violence.'[17] Mark went on to compare the Shrewsbury 24 to Hitler.

In November 1981, the workers at the Manchester engineering firm, Lawrence Scott, went out on strike. Picketing the front entrance of their site, the workers were bewildered when bus-loads of police arrived without explaining their purpose. Soon after, police helicopters flew in, so that the management could break the strike by airlifting the goods out, right over their heads. The airlift had been laid on by the Thatcher loyalist and Manchester Chief Constable, James Anderton. Anderton was known for launching public, right-wing tirades in which he would rail against what he described as Britain's 'moral descent,' in which 'left-wing groups and factions within the ethnic minorities' were 'pecking away at the foundations of society.'[18] A newspaper report from 2012 alleged that Thatcher was forced to step in to save Anderton's career after he said that Aids patients were 'living in a cesspool of their own making.'[19] Rather than acting as unbiased agents of the law, some senior officers appeared to be becoming more and more politically aligned. An open, publicly-stated animosity was emerging toward those on the political left. In 1980, Peter Wright's predecessor as the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police explained on television that it was 'common sense to keep files on anyone with an affinity to communism.'[20] He also wanted files kept on homosexuals and anyone found guilty of 'indiscipline in schools.'[21] The hard-right rhetoric being espoused by the country's most senior policemen was indistinguishable from the law-and-order dogma being expressed by Margaret Thatcher and other members of the Conservative Party. In 1981 the Head of

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[15] Phil Scraton. 'From Saltley Gates to Orgreave: A History of the Policing of Recent Industrial Disputes,' in Bob Fine & Robert Miller (eds.) *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p154.
[16] Matthew Taylor, 'Ricky Tomlinson calls on government to lift 'veil of secrecy' on Shrewsbury 24,' *The Guardian* 20th January 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jan/20/ricky-tomlinson-shrewsbury-24-secrecy
[17] Emsley, *The English Police*, p186.
[18] Ibid
[19] Untitled, 'Margaret Thatcher saved career of police chief who made Aids remarks,' *the Telegraph* 4th January 2012, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8991935/Margaret-Thatcher-saved-career-of-police-chief-who-made-Aids-remarks.html (Accessed 5th July 2019).
[20] Emsley, *The English Police*, p186.
[21] Ibid

the Police Federation, Leslie Curtis, went further by openly questioning the willingness of the British police force to work under any future Labour government.[22]

However, the majority of British police officers had always been politically and morally conservative.[23] Much academic literature on the police revealed an 'ingrained antagonism of police officers toward the political left.'[24] That reflected the fact that much public order policing in the 20th Century had revolved around labour disputes and union activity. However, the evidence might be taken to suggest that the years prior to the miners' strike saw a move toward open partisanship among Britain' most senior police officers. The rhetoric from senior officers was not only ideologically conservative in nature, but also widely supportive of the Conservative Party, and hostile toward Labour. The police were also hostile toward anyone who questioned their methods, dismissing any criticism as the work of subversives. In an interview with the *Liverpool Echo* in October 1981, the Chief Constable of Merseyside, Kenneth Oxford, responded to critics regarding the alleged brutality of his officers by denouncing his detractors as people of 'dubious political intent.'[25] Writing in the *New Statesman* in November that year, Police Federation Chair, James Jardine, dismissed anyone critical of the police as 'the usual ragbag of people who spend their time sniping at the police service.'[26] Although some chief constables appeared politically aligned to Thatcher's loyalists within the state, their public statements were at odds with the adherence to stealth favoured by those in Whitehall, MI5, and the DSPU. A lack of guardedness concerning political persuasion had earned senior officers a rebuke by the Home Office in June 1984.[27]

During the first weeks of the strike, one of either Harrington or Hilary called a selection of politically-aligned Chief Constables to a meeting in London. At the meeting, the gathered policemen were given a 'personal message' from the Prime Minister.[28] The Home Office mandarin announced that, in Thatcher's opinion, a subversive cell was orchestrating violence in regard to the strike, and that weakness in police intelligence-gathering was entirely responsible for failing to prove it – thus far.[29] Thatcher wanted the chief constables to set up a 'Public Order Intelligence Unit' to gather intelligence related to the strike which might be used to prove that certain subversive leaders were

[22] Bob Fine & Robert Miller (&eds.) 'Law of Market and Rule of Law,' in *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p14.
[23] Tom Cockcroft. *Police Culture: Themes and Concepts* (New York: Routledge 2013), p76.
[24] Ibid, p77.
[25] Phil Scraton. *Power, Conflict and Criminalisation* (Oxon: Taylor and Francis 2007), p22.
[26] Ibid
[27] Home Office Report to Thatcher, June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[28] Seamus Milne. *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (London: Verso 2014), p318.
[29] Ibid.

orchestrating the whole thing behind the scenes.[30] If such information came to light, then those centrally-orchestrating subversives could be prosecuted accordingly. Many of the Chief Constables in attendance responded enthusiastically to the new directive.[31] Given the anti-union activities and reactionary public statements displayed by the chief constables, they might well have appeared to be the perfect candidates to join the Home Office and MI5 in any attempt to compile a dossier of evidence against Scargill. However, the senior policemen could hardly go about the country collecting evidence themselves. Each chief constable would need a small, secretive force to undertake the legwork - with no qualms about engaging in politically-partisan activity and a good working relationship with MI5. Each chief constable had just such a force at their disposal.

Originally founded in 1883 to combat Irish republicans, The Metropolitan Police's Special Branch (SB) were revered and feared in equal measure. Since the late 1960s, SB had spied on pacifists, unemployed workers, striking unionists and communists.[32] In the sixties, SB had numbered 225 elite police officers. By the early eighties, the number was 1,600.[33] Also during that period, Branch officers had spread out across other areas of the United Kingdom into provincial forces. In 1978, the Labour Home Secretary Merlyn Rees had explained that the exact role of SB was to 'collect information on those who I think [might] cause problems for the state.'[34] The Metropolitan Special Branch's commander during the mid-1970s was Conrad Hepworth Dixon.

Dixon reminisced about the peculiar recruitment process that he and other prospective policemen underwent (only those with exemplary records were considered). Dixon was marched into a room and told to strip naked. Then, 'a man in a white coat came in and stared at my lower half, examined my feet, and walked wordlessly away.'[35] Shortly afterwards, Dixon was transferred to Special Branch. Rising through the ranks to eventually become the commanding officer, Dixon was credited as the man who set-up the Special Demonstration Squad, a unit within Special Branch which infiltrated left-wing groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s. 'Bob Robinson', whose real name was Robert Lambert was a Special Branch officer who went undercover in a number of animal rights and left-wing groups between 1977 and 1987. 'Robinson' was on the picket line at the Wapping dispute in 1986 alongside his genuinely animal rights-aligned girlfriend Charlotte. 'Robinson' later fathered a child with Charlotte before disappearing overnight. Charlotte was only made aware of the deception in 2010 when, completely by chance, she saw a picture of the real Robert Lambert in the *Daily*

[30] Ibid, p319.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Rob Evans & Paul Lewis. *Undercover: The True Story of Britain's Secret Police* (Croydon: Guardian Faber Publishing 2013), p22.
[33] Ibid, p23.
[34] Ibid, p22.
[35] Ibid, p9.

Mail.[36] In the meantime, Lambert had made no effort whatsoever to contact either Charlotte or his now 24-year-old son.

In light of the Lambert case, a public inquiry into undercover policing began in 2011, led by a retired judge, Sir John Mitting. The inquiry was to examine the mass, covert infiltration of political groups by Special Branch over a period of 50 years. Mitting and his team were given the task of scrutinising a range of misconduct, including the frequent deception of women into intimate relationships.[37] By 2013, fourteen more inquiries had been announced after it became clear that several other Special Branch officers had, like Lambert, fathered children while undercover.[38] Dixon justified the work of Special Branch's undercover officers by claiming that the left-wing groups infiltrated were 'subversive,' even under the old definition.[39] The Special Branch commanding officer argued that 'the more vociferous spokesmen of the Left are calling for the complete overthrow of parliamentary democracy and the substitution with various brands of socialism and workers control.'[40] In 1984, Special Branch was able to significantly broaden its list of targets. As previously discussed, in early 1984 the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall had stated to a Commons Select Committee that many Special Branch officers took the view that 'all activists may be subversive, and both individuals and groups critical of the established order are marked out for surveillance and recording.'[41] SB officers even had their own justifying term - 'domestic extremist' - to account for counter-subversion and infiltration against left-wing targets.[42] Bob 'Robinson' Lambert was awarded an MBE for services to policing in 2008.

Special Branch had longstanding ties with MI5 and had gained a reputation as Britain's 'political police,' who acted as the Security Service's 'footsoldiers.'[43] A secondary Home Affairs Select Committee in 1985 recorded that SB was acquiring the 'sinister reputation of a force which persecutes harmless citizens for political reasons, acts in nefarious ways to assist the Security Service, is accountable to no one, and represents a threat to civil liberties.'[44] A Special Branch whistleblower, Peter Francis, came forward in 2015 to tell *The Guardian* that a string of Labour MPs including Diane Abbott and Peter Hain had secret files kept on them and had been monitored

[36] Ibid, p45.
[37] Rob Evans, 'Police spies infiltrated UK leftwing groups for decades,' *The Guardian*, 15th October 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/15/undercover-police-spies-infiltrated-uk-leftwing-groups-for-decades
[38] Evans and Lewis, *Undercover p* 4, 8,14 & 19.
[39] Ibid, p22.
[40] Ibid, p13.
[41] Chief Constable John Alderson quoted in Norton-Taylor, *In Defence of the Realm?*, p29.
[42] Dave Smith & Phil Chamberlain. *Blacklisted: The Secret War Between Big Business and Union Activists* (Oxford: New Internationalist Publications Limited 2015), p255.
[43] Evans and Lewis, *Undercover*, p22.
[44] Ibid.

regularly by Special Branch for decades.[45] At the back end of the 2017 general election campaign, The *Telegraph* quoted an unnamed former Special Branch officer who said that the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn was monitored for over 20 years because he was 'deemed to be subversive'.[46] As well as Labour MPs, Special Branch spied on members involved in numerous political campaigns including those against apartheid, the arms trade, nuclear weapons, the monarchy, as well as several trade unions.[47] Such was the scope of the multi-decade operation, it was reported in 2018 that, since 1968, Special Branch had monitored 124 different groups.[48] Those 124 were overwhelmingly left-wing and progressive groups which challenged the status quo. Just three far-right groups, including the National Front, were infiltrated.[49]

As with MI5, it might be argued that the overwhelming propensity for monitoring left-wing groups identified Special Branch as a reactionary and inherently conservative organisation. As such, they would make an important addition to the growing list of state agencies charged with producing Thatcher's dossier of evidence. Most of the evidence in the paragraphs above only came to light in or after 2010. During the miners' strike, the exact nature of Special Branch's role was kept secret. Police authorities were kept in the dark about the work of their respective Special Branch.[50] Any inquiry would be rebuffed. In 1983, Oxford and Anderton had both come under pressure from their respective police authorities regarding the accountability of each force's Special Branch. Anderton wrote to the Home Office to seek support for the withholding of any information concerning 'the function of my Special Branch and its relationship with the Security Service. I would like to be assured of full Home Office support in the event of my choosing to refuse that information.'[51]

Established in 1948, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) provided a forum for the country's chief constables to share ideas and discuss strategic responses to nationwide policing issues. As such, ACPO had been meeting regularly for the duration of the strike to discuss training,

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[45] Rob Evans, & Paul Lewis, 'Why exactly were the police spying on Jeremy Corbyn?' *The Guardian*, 27th June 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/undercover-with-paul-lewis-and-rob-evans/2017/jun/27/why-exactly-were-the-police-spying-on-jeremy-corbyn

[46] Hayley Dixon & Kate McCann, 'Special Branch monitored Jeremy Corbyn for 20 years amid fears he was 'undermining democracy,' *The Telegraph*, 7th June 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/06/exclusive-special-branch-monitored-jeremy-corbyn-20-years-amid/

[47] Rob Evans, 'Police spies infiltrated UK leftwing groups for decades,' *The Guardian*, 15th October 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/15/undercover-police-spies-infiltrated-uk-leftwing-groups-for-decades

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Smith and Chamberlain, *Blacklisted*, p255.

[51] CC Manchester Jim Anderton to Home Office, undated 1983, *TNA Kew*, HO504/34.

equipment and coordination of forces.[52] However, ACPO was not an authorised or official body.[53] In May 1984, two months into the strike, ACPO President David Hall prepared a report for other chief constables which they might use in response to media questions concerning the National Reporting Centre at New Scotland Yard, discussed in the last chapter. Hall gave a mundane run-down of the NRC's brief history which had, admitted the chief constable, been set-up in response to the Saltley Gate incident during the 1972 miners' strike.[54] However, Hall made one point which earned him a severe reprimand - the ACPO President admitted that the Home Office had been instrumental in setting up the NRC and was involved in the miners' strike again in 1984. The Home Office's Peter Honour labelled Hall's report 'unusually naïve and vulnerable' - for revealing evidence of the Home Office's central involvement in the running of both the 1972 and 1984 strikes.[55] Honour berated Hall, and reminded him that when it came to the general public, it was to be maintained that the central apparatus of government was neutral, the Home Office was not involved in the strike, and that chief constables acted without central command from Whitehall.[56] Rather ironically given that statement, Honour then re-wrote the report before it was dispatched to the country's other chief constables. [57]

The top-down interference by the Home Office was matched by the inherent biases displayed by some senior policemen. On the same day as Hall's reprimand, shortly before Leon Brittan was due to give a speech to the Police Federation broadcast live on the BBC's *World at 1* radio programme, the Federation's Chairman Leslie Curtis took to the airwaves to say that 'since the coal dispute began, the police service had discovered who their enemies were.'[58] The comment was met with applause from the gathered policemen.[59] The political partisanship was so extreme that the Home Office worried that such public displays of loyalty might be detrimental.[60] Although ACPO was a useful organisation to have on-side, Hall, like some other policemen, had needed reminding that the Home Office preferred adherence to stealth.

Nottinghamshire Chief Constable Charles McLaughlan, a staunch Methodist and outspoken conservative, was a man cut from a similar cloth to other Thatcher-aligned chief constables such as Anderton and Oxford.[61] Unlike those other two, however, McLaughlan's county was right on the front-line of the strike. In May 1984, the split between the majority of working and minority of

[52] Peter Honour Internal to other F4 Division, 2nd May 1984, *TNA Kew,* HO325/899/2.
[53] Tony Benn *Hansard* extract on training manual 22/7/85, *TNA Kew*, HO325/714.
[54] ACPO President David Hall report on the NRC May 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623
[55] Honour to Hillary 23rd May 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Copy of BBC's radio programme World At 1 23rd May 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Brian Harrison. *Finding a Role: The United Kingdom 1970-1990* (St Ives: Oxford UP 2011), p163.

striking Notts miners made the county's pits a major target for Yorkshire's flying pickets. On May Day, scuffles had broken out and arrests were made outside Mansfield NUM Headquarters as rival marches between working and striking miners clashed.[62] The county was also a major target for the new Police Support Units, sent by other forces as mutual aid via the NRC. During the first week of the strike alone, 9,700 police officers were deployed from other areas into Nottinghamshire. By May, that had led to over 900 arrests.[63] For McLaughlan, that should have been pleasing news. The chief constable had a close relationship with senior Tories and had hosted a social evening attended by both the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary in March. McLaughlan had sent personal thanks to both for their attendance.[64] Thatcher had made it clear that she expected those arrested in Nottinghamshire to be quickly put on trial and jailed – as an example to others.[65] However, there was a problem. McLaughlan told the Lord Chancellor, Quintin Hogg (who would later suggest the 'word to the wise,' with the judiciary), that he had some reservations about 'the quality of some of the evidence upon which arrests had been made and for this reason [was] not anxious for the dates of trial to be fixed too soon.'[66] More specifically, 'police officers preparing evidence in relation to charges for offences in relation to the miners' dispute have been offered a standard passage for use in statements.'[67] In May 1984, one month before Orgreave, police officers drafted into Nottinghamshire under mutual aid arrangements had been given pre-written standard passages to be used in statements justifying the arrests that they had made. Moreover, CC McLaughlan and through him the Lord Chancellor, knew about it. Here was another example of Hogg ignoring his own warning about elective dictatorship.

On the 19th July 1984, at the height of the strike, Thatcher gave her 'enemy within speech' for the first time to the 1922 Committee of Tory backbenchers. The Prime Minister thundered that 'we had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands.'[68] Crucially, Thatcher then seemed to tie in the striking miners with Galtieri's forces - 'now we have to fight the enemy within.'[69] The terminology used by the Prime Minister was not new. Enoch Powell, of 'rivers of blood' fame, had used the same 'enemy within' phrase in a 1970 speech against Irish republicans, trade unionists and ethnic

[62] David Howell. 'Defiant Dominoes: Working Miners and the 1984-85 Strike,' in Ben Jackson and Robert Saunders (eds.) *Making Thatcher's Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2012), pp.148-164, p148.
[63] Report on Use of Criminal & Civil Law supplied by the Home Office, June 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1331.
[64] CC Notts Charles McLaughlan to Brittan, 28 March 1985, TNA Kew, HO325/900.
[65] Lord Chancellor Quintin Hogg to Thatcher, 16th May 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Peter Honour to Sibson, both Home Office, 16 May 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/623.
[68] Margaret Thatcher. 'Speech to the 1922 Committee: the Enemy Within,' 19th July 1984, *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/105563
[69] Ibid.

minorities.[70] Powell's speech had been dug-up by Norman Tebbit and copied to Whitelaw while the Tories were in opposition in 1977.[71] In the original speech, Powell also used the phrase 'enemies of the state' interchangeably with 'the enemy within.'[72] Although Thatcher had ditched the more overtly racist targets of Powell's ire, it seemed clear that those who she did target – the miners, 'the city of Liverpool,' and 'some local authorities' – were likewise recast.[73] Echoing Powell's earlier speech, Thatcher publicly announced that she regarded her political opponents as enemies of the state – though she later denied that the phrase was meant to be applied to rank-and-file men. Instead, argued the Prime Minister, 'critics have distorted the meaning [of the enemy within] by suggesting that the phrase was a reference to the miners at large - rather than Marxist militants.'[74] The real target for her speech, she claimed, was much more specific. Thatcher railed against those at the top of the trade union movement who were 'conspiring to use union power…to break, defy and subvert the laws.'[75] In as many words, Thatcher had indicated to those loyal to her within the state apparatus and operating within the culture of conformity that the miners' leaders –particularly Scargill – were enemies of the state and should be dealt with as such.[76] As the journalist Seamus Milne put it, the enemy within speech was a 'calculated signal of unambiguous clarity to all government agencies that the gloves should come off.'[77] The Home Office, MI5 and ACPO chief constables would be expected to respond to that. In private, the Prime Minister was even more explicit.

A few days before the enemy within speech on the 16th July, Harrington and Hilary set up a meeting in Whitehall with Rimington, a further MI5 officer, Cecil Shipp, and two ACPO chief constables. Harrington warned all attendees that this type of interdepartmental meeting, particularly involving as it did the Security Service, should be kept secret, as it might 'look bad' in the eyes of the public, given what was about to be discussed.[78] At the opening of the meeting, Harrington read out a statement in which he revealed that the Prime Minister had 'made further complaints regarding police handling of the strike,' particularly concerning Scargill.[79] Rimington argued that, in order to proceed, the Security Service needed a clearer and more specific view of Thatcher's requirements. Despite the lack of clarity however, she had kept up surveillance on

[70] Camilla Schofield. *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (London: Cambridge UP 2009), p335.
[71] Ibid, p341.
[72] Ibid, p335.
[73] Thatcher, 'Speech to the 1922 Committee: the Enemy Within.'
[74] Margaret Thatcher. *The Downing Street Years* (London: HarperCollins 1993), p370.
[75] Ibid, p371.
[76] Thatcher, 'Speech to the 1922 Committee: the Enemy Within.'
[77] Milne, *Enemy Within*, p24.
[78] Roy Harrington to Partridge, 16th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624,
[79] Ibid.

Scargill. The Assistant Director offered the reassurance that the Security Service had active informants, and that through them she would 'probably get wind of another Orgreave.'[80]

The interdepartmental meetings between the Home Office, ACPO and MI5 continued throughout August. The civil servants revealed exactly what it was that the meetings were meant to produce. If it could be established that the NUM President was organising picketing nationally, charges could be brought for illegal secondary-picketing.[81] If it could also be established that the NUM leader was ordering criminal acts such as violence, intimidation and criminal damage to be carried out, a secondary charge might be brought.[82] Here was a way for all three agencies to combine to produce Thatcher's 'dossier of evidence' which could then be used in a court of law to prosecute Scargill. The problem for the three agencies was that picketing tended to be organised at regional level. Moreover, although there was some evidence of striking miners engaging in criminal acts at and around the picket-line, no evidence had been found to suggest that that they were under specific orders to do so. Because they were engaged in surveillance and espionage against the miners' leaders, MI5 were aware of that. Rimington showed some reservations about the Home Office's mission to compile evidence against Scargill, given that her agency's own surveillance had revealed no such central organisation. The MI5 Officer also knew that the brief pushed constitutional boundaries and cautioned that any 'interception directed at NUM headquarters would not be within Security Service guidelines.'[83] The Home Office seemed less worried about constitutionality – but again cautioned of the importance of stealth. Harrington and Hilary's superior, Partridge, was worried about how meetings between chief constables, the Security Service and supposedly impartial senior civil servants – all of them permanent members of the state - might look to the public, particularly given the apparent partisan nature of the remit being discussed. Partridge warned that the 'Labour Party and TUC might use this [information of the existence of the meetings] against us, due to [their] sensitive nature.'[84] This might have seemed like an odd turn of phrase for a supposedly non-partisan civil servant such as Partridge, who used the inclusive pronoun 'us' and seemingly viewed the opposition Labour Party as an enemy organisation to which information should be restricted.

Brittan wrote to Thatcher on the 3rd August to tell her that the plan to compile the dossier was for the Home Office, the police and MI5 to secretly collaborate in an effort to look for picketing coordination and criminal activity emanating from those at the top of the NUM. The Home Secretary

[80] Ibid.
[81] Minutes of F4 Division Meeting, 6th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Brian Caffarey to Partridge, 25th July 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[84] Partridge to Nigel Pantling Private Secretary to Brittan, 1st August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.

told the Prime Minister that there were now 'possibilities [that] operations might be mounted against subversives [which] might throw light on the way picketing is being organised...this is being pursued.'[85] Civil servants from other government departments were also brought into the interdepartmental meetings, to offer any assistance that they could. On the 6th August, the Permanent Undersecretary for the Department of Employment, George Wake, gave his department's full support for the plan and encouraged the identification of what he called 'national picketing coordinators.'[86] In case anybody was left in doubt as to who Wake had in mind, he reminded the attendees that 'all efforts must be centred on Mr Scargill.'[87]

[85] Leon Brittan to Thatcher, 3rd August1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[86] Minutes of F4 Division Meeting, 6th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[87] Mr Wake Department of Employment, cited in Minutes of meeting chaired by Home Office, 6th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.

Chapter 10: 'Activities Which Transcend Police Boundaries': The Leicester Unit

Once the dossier of evidence was produced, Scargill would have to have a day in court. It seemed unlikely that the evidence might come about by MI5 finding someone to testify against the NUM President. Despite Rimington's earlier assertions about undercover operatives, Brittan had told Thatcher about the difficulties in getting informants into the NUM hierarchy.[1] During one of the three-agency meetings in July, a programme of 'telephone intercepts' in which the NUM President might implicate himself was dismissed - because Scargill knew that his phone was tapped.[2] The three agencies decided that the information needed to target Scargill as a 'national picketing coordinator' might, in a sense, already exist. If time was spent analysing data from picketing as it was already occurring nationwide, reflected Partridge, trends or patterns might emerge which might suggest central planning of some kind.[3] It might then be possible, with the right solicitor, to convince a jury of Scargill's 'coordinating hand' – as South Yorkshire CC Peter Wright had put it. Such a solicitor had, in September, made himself available. Francis Bennion was a private sector solicitor and committed Thatcher loyalist. Bennion wrote to the Attorney General Nigel Havers to argue that 'conspiracy charges should be brought against [the] miners' leaders.'[4] Bennion was highly critical of Havers, who he accused of 'disclaim[ing] all responsibility' that charges had not already been brought and that the miners' leaders were still free men.[5] Havers might well have been affronted that the private sector loyalist had criticised him in that way. However, Bennion's letter had been very well received in one quarter. A copy of the letter had found its way to the Prime Minister. Thatcher wrote directly to the solicitor to express her interest in what he had said. Although the Prime Minister stopped short of echoing Bennion's criticism of Havers because it 'wouldn't be right or proper,' she did inform the solicitor that she had 'requested that [Havers] should let you have his comments on the points which you make.'[6] Any attempt to successfully prosecute Scargill would depend on whether the dossier of evidence of 'picketing coordination' could be produced.

In August, the three agencies revealed their collaboratively-developed plan. A new, secret, cross-agency unit was to be set-up, operating with the purpose of collecting and collating information from local forces and then analysing that data to look for trends and patterns, which might later be used to prove Scargill's involvement. Partridge and his deputies, Harrington and Hilary, were key proponents of the new plan. Partridge wrote to Private Secretary to Brittan, Nigel

[1] Brittan to Thatcher, 3rd August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[2] Harrington to Partridge, 16th July 1984*, TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[3] Partridge to Private Secretary to Brittan Nigel Pantling, 7th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[4] Francis Bennion to Nigel Havers, 11th September 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/625.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Thatcher to Bennion, 11th September, *TNA Kew* 1984, HO325/625.

Pantling, the next day to inform his superior of the setting-up of the unit. Partridge explained that the new group would 'pinpoint targets' in respect to four potential 'crimes' which the miners' leaders might have been instigating others to carry out. Evidence of 'criminal damage, intimidation, conspiracy [including secondary picketing], and subversion' would be searched for.[7] The Unit, it had been decided, would be manned by six Special Branch officers and an MI5 officer.[8] The new seven-person unit, officially the Central Intelligence Unit (CIU), would set-up its base of operations at Leicestershire Constabulary's Communications Centre in Enderby.[9] In preparation for the setting-up of the CIU, Harrington and Hilary had charged Frank Taylor, the Assistant Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police, with the preparation of a report on the functional actualities of the Unit. The Enderby location, which was a remote outpost away from Leicester's main police headquarters, was chosen on the advice of Taylor's report, which had asserted that the CIU should be situated in a location not directly at the heart of the strike, but one nearby.[10] That would give the CIU physical proximity to the front-line without being close enough that its existence might be publicly discovered.

Taylor's report described the Unit's official terms of reference as the 'identification of individuals engaged in organised criminal activities [which] transcend police boundaries.'[11] In order to function, the central CIU would need local forces to each collect their own intelligence from the picket-line and then pass that information on to the CIU. Sixteen strike-bound local forces were given instruction to do that, under their own terms of reference.[12] Each local force would be duty-bound to 'provide intelligence leading to the obtaining of evidence to support the prosecution of persons committing criminal offences.'[13] Taylor advised that in each force, local Special Branch officers were best suited for the role.[14] By the last week of September, the CIU had been set-up in Enderby and was fully operational. Throughout its existence, it would be referred to by Home Office civil servants, MI5 officers and Special Branch officers alike as the Leicester Unit.[15]

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[7] Partridge to Pantling, 7th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[8] Minutes of F4-Chaired Meeting, 6th August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[9] Robert Goslin of the Leicester Unit to Charles McLaughlin CC Notts, 19th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Frank Taylor Assistant Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, Taylor Report on NUM Dispute, 3rd September 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[12] Note on Home Office meeting with DS Martindale of Leicester Unit, 9th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[13] Frank Taylor Assistant Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, Taylor Report on NUM Dispute, 3rd September 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[14] Ibid
[15] Nigel Pantling to Cubbon Permanent Secretary of the Home Office, 9th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.

On 9th October, Pantling, wrote to Brian Cubbon, another Home Office Permanent Secretary, to confirm that the Leicester Unit had been fully operational for two weeks. MI5 remained involved with the project. As well as seconding an officer, Pantling remarked, 'the Security Service gave a considerable amount of private advice…to facilitate the exchange of information, and they will remain closely in touch with the work of the Unit.'[16] Cubbon passed the information about the setting-up of the unit directly to the Prime Minister the next day. He told Thatcher that both 'the Home Office and the Security Service stand ready to help.'[17] That may have been well received by the Prime Minister. Solid steps were now being taken to amass the dossier of evidence.

One of the Leicester Unit's chief members of staff was Deputy Chief Constable Robert Goslin of Cambridgeshire.[18] DCC Goslin had been involved in the establishment of the National Reporting Centre, and as such was a perfect candidate for a multi-agency, multi-location undertaking like the Leicester Unit. However, Harrington was careful to maintain distance between the new, official police headquarters at New Scotland Yard, and the secretive Leicester Unit, advising that 'a clear distinction' had to be upheld, or at least simulated, in case of any public exposure.[19] The reality was, concluded Harrington, that Goslin's 'experience with the NRC would be invaluable.'[20] Another member of the Leicester Unit was Detective Superintendent Martindale, of the West Midlands Special Branch.[21] From September onwards, Goslin and Martindale were the chief correspondents to Home Office inquiries. A meeting on the 9th October revealed the procedural flow of the Unit. Martindale, who was identified as the head of the unit, reported through Goslin who in turn reported to the new ACPO President - Charles McLaughlan.[22] McLaughlan, who was trusted and liked by Thatcher personally, had replaced David Hall at the same time as the Leicester Unit had been set up.[23] This procedural flow made the CIU seem like a police initiative. In reality, the CIU also sent its reports directly to Partridge, Harrington and Hilary at the Home Office, while MI5 had an officer inside the unit (Appendix 2 for full procedural flow).

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[16] Ibid.
[17] Brian Cubbon to Thatcher, 10th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624
[18] Harrington of F4 Division to Hugh Taylor Secretary of the Home Office, 7th September 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624. NOTE: Deputy Chief Constable Goslin is referred to erroneously as 'Gosling' throughout the evidence, including in this reference. However, he later spells his own name without the 'g.' Further references to Goslin will give the correct spelling, regardless of the spelling of the Home Office mandarins.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Brooker of Home Office meeting with Detective Superintendent Martindale of the Leicester Unit, 9th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[23] Harrington of the Home Office to Hugh Taylor Secretary of the Home Office, 7th September 1984, TNA Kew, HO325/624.

Once the Leicester Unit officers began their analysis of the incoming evidence, a problem became evident. The sheer amount of evidence coming in from the front line seemed like the scale of their task might have been underestimated – and was perhaps more than could be expected for a seven-man team. Martindale told the Home Office that the Leicester Unit needed a computer, if they were to succeed in their task of using the intelligence sent to them to identify patterns linking back to Scargill. The computer should be installed with the police's state-of-the-art Crime Patterns Analysis Program (CPAP) used by the Metropolitan Police to link together unsolved crimes, argued Martindale.[24] In 1984, however, the installation of a computer and programme would come with a very large financial cost. Although that might have put off the Home Office, they got a timely reminder of their objectives on the 16th October. Robin Butler, Thatcher's Principal Private Secretary and another hand-picked civil servant, wrote to the Home Office to advise them that the Prime Minister was more than 'a little disappointed that the police are still so far from being able to identify likely sources of intelligence more specifically,' despite several weeks of CIU operation.[25] Butler reinforced the Prime Minister's expectations regarding the Leicester Unit by adding that Thatcher 'hoped' that '[the police] and the security services will continue to give priority to obtaining information which will assist in the prevention and punishment of crime now being committed in support of this dispute.'[26]

The Prime Minister's own frustrations were being exacerbated by her new ally Francis Bennion, the private sector solicitor. Bennion had, by that time, developed a personal correspondence with Thatcher. He told her in a letter that 'Scargill should have been prosecuted and convicted for his undoubted offences at Saltley in 1972. We should have heard no more from him.'[27] Whether he meant to or not, Bennion had stumbled across the best way to gain Thatcher's approval. That is, to tell her exactly what she wanted to hear. The Prime Minister was renowned for intolerance of the airing of any opposing view or offered criticism, however constructive, emanating from her advisors.[28] Bennion told her that it was not only possible to prosecute Scargill, but that in fact the NUM President should have been jailed twelve years earlier. Bennion also sent his 'heartfelt congratulations on escaping assassination,' a reference to the Brighton Bomb detonated by the IRA at Thatcher's hotel before the Tory Party Conference.[29] Another private-sector loyalist, Woodrow Homes millionaire Frank Taylor (a different Frank Taylor to the policeman involved in the setting up

[24] Discussed in Partridge to Pantling, 14TH November 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[25] Principal Private Secretary to Thatcher Robin Butler to Secretary of the Home Office Hugh Taylor, 16th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Francis Bennion to Thatcher, 22nd October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/625.
[28] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p107.
[29] Francis Bennion to Thatcher, 22nd October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/625

of the Leicester Unit), wrote to Brittan in late October to echo Bennion's sentiment and inquire about the possibility of a private-sector prosecution against Scargill. Brittan replied that 'if…there is sufficient evidence..the government will in no way seek to prevent charges [being] brought.'[30] Behind the scenes, three agencies of the state were now attempting to collect and supply that evidence via the Leicester Unit.

On 30th October, R Sillence, a Staff Officer with HMI Constabulary, visited the Leicester Unit at the Home Office's behest, to assess the situation. Sillence reported that the CIU had, despite a relatively short period in operation, begun to acquire substantial lists in regard to specific unlawful activity at picket-lines nationwide. Martindale told Sillence that 3,000 crimes had now been logged from the 16 feeder forces.[31] Sillence appeared not to have been given a brief about the exact remit of the Leicester Unit. After studying the evidence gathered, however, he correctly reported that 'my understanding is that one of the principle objectives is to be able to access the information with a view to linking offences.'[32] Sillence had been asked to consider a computer held by Leicestershire Constabulary, which might prove a cheaper option that the Met's CPAP. The Staff Officer reported that the Leicestershire computer had been used to link five unsolved murders in the previous year. However, warned the policeman, that system had only been used specifically for serious crimes and 'not for anything which could be remotely considered political.'[33] Sillence finished his report by warning the Home Office that without the expensive computer program from London, the Leicester Unit would undoubtably 'fail to achieve its objectives.'[34] Ignoring Sillence's reference to 'political' objectives but taking on board his reluctance to sanction the use of a device against Scargill used previously to catch mass murderers, Partridge and the Home Office faced a stark choice. On the one hand, they would have to provide the funds for the installation and running costs of the CPAP – risking embarrassment and claims of political bias from within the state if the existence of the Leicester Unit ever became public. On the other hand, they risked failing to carry-out the Prime Minister's will – when Thatcher had already voiced her disappointment. Operating within the culture of conformity, the Home Office Undersecretary went with the former.

Partridge sanctioned the installation of the CPAP at the Leicester Unit's Enderby headquarters in early November. Another HMCIC officer, S Vessey, informed the Home Office that landlines would also be needed from Leicester to London, which 'would obviously involve a fair

[30] Leon Brittan to Lord Frank Taylor of Hadfield, Late October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/625.
[31] R Sillence HMCIC to S Kippax Home Office, 31st October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO504/34.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

amount of expense.'[35] Justifying the Home Office's decision, Partridge circulated a report in which he revealed that he had recently visited Yorkshire picket-lines. Back in Whitehall, he told other civil servants that the Prime Minister was correct and that he was 'more sure than ever that picketing was not organised locally.'[36] Partridge agreed to pay £5,000, which was the running cost of the program, directly from the Home Office's Directorate of Telecommunications budget.[37] The Home Office was now financing the Leicester Unit directly. However, the computer program was to come with an unexpected cost.

Since its inception, a chief concern for those involved with the Leicester Unit was that the existence of the Unit, the number of state agencies involved, and the nature of its intelligence-gathering directive, might become known to the public. An operation which brought together the Home Office, the police (ACPO and Special Branch) and MI5 to produce a dossier of evidence against Scargill or anyone else might be difficult to legitimise. The involvement of the Security Service meant another reason for secrecy. Moreover, the Home Office was now using a large amount of taxpayers' money to directly fund the CIU. However, the installation of the Met's CPAP system in Enderby was uncovered by *Guardian* journalist Richard Norton-Taylor. Looking further into the nature of CPAP's proposed installation in Leicester, Norton-Taylor had accidentally stumbled upon the existence of the Leicester Unit. The journalist wrote an article, published on the 25th October, which reported the existence of the Unit and its location.[38] Norton-Taylor's report had many inaccuracies. While the journalist correctly asserted that ACPO were involved in the Unit, there was no mention of either Special Branch or MI5.[39] Also unaware of the direct involvement of the Home Office, the article assumed that the Leicestershire Chief Constable, Alan Goodwin, was coordinating the Unit. In truth, Goodwin had no involvement. Norton-Taylor seemed unaware of the significance of his discovery. The journalist did not know that the Unit was being coordinated nationally by three different agencies, nor was he aware of the Unit's remit to link crimes in order to target Scargill. The existence of the Leicester Unit had been revealed, but its intelligence-gathering directive had not.

Senior civil servants within the Home Office were concerned by the article and sought to limit its damage. Their main concern was to distance themselves from the Leicester Unit and, in line with the stealth approach, avoid any public knowledge of Home Office involvement. As President of

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[35] S Vessey HMCIC – note on use of Police National Computer in dispute, 7th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO504/34.
[36] Partridge Report, 22nd October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/625.
[37] Partridge to Pantling, 14th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[38] Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Crimes May go on computer,' *The Guardian Archive* 25th October 1984, https://search.proquest.com/docview/186548292/2D351D7ABE694BDBPQ/18?accountid=10671 (Accessed 24th April 2019).
[39] Ibid.

ACPO, Charles McLaughlin had a copy of the original Taylor Report which had outlined the setting-up of the Unit and its objectives. Not for the first time, the Home Office was wary of police carelessness when it came to the stealth approach. They wrote to McLaughlin to outline their 'concerns' and to remind him of the document's confidentiality.[40] Harrington reassured Partridge that those police officers aware of the CIU had been reminded of the 'highly sensitive aspects of the Unit.' Not least, reflected Harrington, 'the fact that the Security Services are directly involved in the running of it.'[41] If the Taylor Report became public, speculated Harrington, it 'could be used to create embarrassment,' given that the Home Office was financing it directly.[42] Harrington might have been concerned that the Report's stated remit for the Leicester Unit - the 'obtaining of evidence to support the prosecution of persons' involved with the strike who 'transcend police boundaries' - needed little interpretation.[43] The Home Office man sent round a document entitled 'public stance on the Leicester Unit' which was sent to all senior officers who were aware of the Unit.[44] Chief constables were told that they could admit the existence of the Unit (which was now impossible to deny, given *The Guardian* article), but there was to be no mention of Special Branch or MI5.[45] Referring to the computer program, Harrington said that it could be admitted that a request had been made for the national computer program, the Police National Computer (PNC).[46] In reality, the PNC had already been dismissed in favour of the plan to install the Met's own, smaller CPAP. If the press were told that access to the national PNC program had been denied to the Leicester Unit, however, they might not even consider the possibility of CPAP – which was specific to the Met in London. Harrington's memo advised fellow Home Office civil servants and police officers to essentially admit to what had already been revealed in the article. That is, the Leicester Unit existed, ACPO was involved, and a request for a computer program had been made. However, the involvement of the Home Office in the funding of the Unit, the involvement of Special Branch and MI5, the fact that the Met's CPAP system was installed, and crucially, the real remit of the Leicester Unit – were all kept from the public.

By the early months of 1985 the defeat of Scargill and the NUM seemed certain. Thatcher's loyalists within the DSPU had used the Ridley Report to plan, instigate, and brutally supress the strike. While the overall strike was being won by Thatcher's private-sector loyalists, her Whitehall

[40] Brooker to Harrington, 26th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[41] Harrington to Partridge, 26th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Frank Taylor Assistant Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, Taylor Report on NUM Dispute, 3rd September 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[44] Harrington to Partridge, 26th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.

and other public-sector loyalists had not been as successful in satisfying the Prime Minister's other wish – the jailing of Scargill. Partridge dispatched the Home Office's David Brooker to Enderby on 7th February to check the progress of the Leicester Unit. He was accompanied by McLaughlan's predecessor as ACPO Chairman, David Hall. The Home Office and ACPO men were debriefed by three members of the Leicester Unit - Martindale, Goslin and Chevasse. Given the money and resources that the Home Office had thus far spent on the Unit, they may well have been disappointed by Martindale's overall conclusions. In regard to any charges of 'national picketing coordinating,' the Detective Superintendent said that after studying the amassed evidence, he very much 'doubted that the top structure of the NUM was involved.'[47] Martindale acknowledged that, despite six months of Home Office-funded counter-subversion, the Leicester Unit had no dossier of evidence and had not identified any 'trends or patterns' linking Scargill with picketing. When it came to finding Scargill's 'coordinating hand' in regard to other criminal activity, Martindale felt that evidence could still be obtained to prove that a link existed – but only if undercover agents were deployed to infiltrate the NUM hierarchy. The Detective Superintendent reflected that during the British Leyland strike, 'well-placed sources' had been able to direct that strike to the government's liking, and that the undercovers had a 'major bearing on the conduct of disputes in that company.'[48] The fact that the Leicester Unit had not been able to get the evidence to prosecute Scargill was not down to the NUM President's innocence, inferred Martindale, but down to a lack of undercover spies within the upper echelons of the union. If undercover agents were in place, Scargill might one day slip-up and give the Leicester Unit something concrete to use against him. With the miners' strike nearing its end and no dossier imminent, the Home Office's patience with the Leicester Unit was coming to an end.

The Leicester Unit would last only as long as the strike itself and was disbanded in March 1985. Partridge explained his decision to cut funding and wrap-up the CIU. The Leicester Unit had failed in its only aim, having 'no success in establishing evidence of organisation or planning by the [top level] of the NUM.'[49] As such, the Deputy Undersecretary had concluded that there was 'no firm information about the [continued] value of the Leicester Unit.'[50] Partridge did not undertake an analysis of how much the Leicester Unit had cost during its six months in operation. However, the CPAP program alone had cost £5,000.[51]

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[47] Brooker to Harrington, 7th February1985, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Partridge to Hazell, both Home Office, February 1985, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Partridge to Pantling, 14th November 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.

A letter from the right-wing private-sector organisation, the Law and Order Society (LOS), to Leon Brittan in July 1985 bemoaned the fact that despite the failure of the strike, Scargill remained President of the NUM. LOS Secretary Richard Harrison complained that 'Scargill…is not going to disappear as we had hoped.'[52] Harrison assured Brittan that the LOS 'will go ahead with our plans to launch a private prosecution for criminal conspiracy' against Scargill, and confirmed that he intended to subpoena Charles McLaughlan, Jim Anderton, South Yorkshire Deputy Chief Constable Tony Clement (in charge of police forces at Orgreave), and Brittan himself to give evidence.[53] Plans to prosecute Scargill had been left to Thatcher's private sector loyalists. What Brittan could not tell the eager Harrison was that his efforts were not likely to succeed – given that the police, MI5 and the Home Office collectively had not been able to provide evidence for a successful prosecution. In any case, when the Leicester Unit was wound-up in March 1985, Thatcher's public-sector loyalists, including Michael Partridge, Roy Harrington, and David Hilary, had begun to turn their attention toward other targets. Partridge forwarded a letter to another civil servant, Robert Hazell, from the Minister of State, Lord Elton, in which the aging old-Etonian asserted that 'Lambeth council had been taken over by the Trotskyists.'[54] Partridge told Hazell that, in the coming year, 'there are likely to be well-publicised clashes on…public sector pay and possible violence over rate-capping, abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan counties.'[55] Moreover, there were 'indicators of mounting tension in places like Brixton, Hackney and Liverpool.'[56] Thatcher's Whitehall loyalists were not the only ones looking into different areas. Redwood sent a DSPU report to Thatcher that month to say that a new member of his team, Oliver Letwin, had 'built up a good nexus of contacts in the local authority world, to enable him to monitor the activities of the Left [at local government level].'[57] The strike was over, but Thatcher's loyalists, and the culture of conformity, remained. Other areas of the public sector now became central targets. As for the Leicester Unit, Partridge could afford to be dismissive. Reflecting in 1986, he told fellow civil servants that failed prosecutions during the strike had been 'only a marginal setback,' and that when it came to Scargill, it was important that 'martyrs [had not been] created.'[58]

The existence and practices of the Leicester Unit are an example of the weaponisation of sections of the state in the government's responses to the miners' strike. Several agencies of the state collaborated in an effort to 'get Scargill.' Those efforts were not in response to any existing

[52] Richard Harrison Secretary of Law and Order Society to Brittan 8/7/85, HO325/714.
[53] Ibid.
[54] The Lord Elton to Partridge, 5TH February 1985, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Partridge to Hazell, February 1985, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[57] Redwood to Thatcher, March 1985, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/2076.1.
[58] Minutes, Partridge, 30th April 1986, *TNA Kew*, HO325/898.

evidence. Indeed, the eventual failure of the Leicester Unit revealed a distinct lack of evidence. Rather, the Leicester Unit was set-up in response to the Prime Minister's request that a 'dossier of evidence' be assembled to prosecute her political opponent. Operating within the culture of conformity, the Home Office, the Security Service and sections of the police had complied. In the run-up to the strike, senior civil servants had faced the pressure of the 'Scrutineers' and their private-sector superiors in the DSPU. Moreover, the Prime Minister's own non-toleration of opposing views. Under that combined pressure from above, even those who remained politically unaffiliated might have felt forced to comply with directives which did not appear to make any distinction between the governing political party and several agencies of the permanent state. However, some within the upper-echelons of the civil service appeared to welcome directives which appeared politically partisan. Some had engaged in Tory-led counter-subversion since 1972. That was also the case with some senior policemen and MI5 officers, who abandoned adherence to written charters with little or no resistance. Margaret Thatcher essentially decided single-handed that Arthur Scargill was an enemy of the state, and then challenged the various security agencies to go out and prove it. It is possible to imagine that some of those within the agencies of the state attempted to win favour with their leader by interpreting the will of a right-wing Prime Minister who was immensely popular with most of their peer group. It is only in the context of the culture of conformity that the Leicester Unit can be understood – the multi-state-agency targeting of a trade union leader and innocent man (Scargill) at great financial cost (the computer program alone was £5000-per-year) for a crime that did not exist (national picketing coordinator).

The attempt to 'get Scargill' on the orders of the Prime Minister lacked political legitimacy. Like with the DSPU, those agencies involved in the Leicester Unit circumvented that by operating covertly and adhering to stealth. Without public scrutiny, legitimacy was not required. Adherence to stealth was central to the Unit's operation. During the Norton-Taylor incident which exposed the existence of the Unit, Home Office officials were most concerned with publicly distancing themselves from it – despite the fact that they were involved at every stage and even financed it. If Home Office officials felt that their own involvement in the Leicester Unit was perfectly legitimate, then their attempts to feign non-involvement and to hide the knowledge of their involvement from the Labour Party become difficult to explain. The existence and practices of the Leicester Unit reveal a section of the state acting without moral authority. The Ridley Report had advised attack by stealth and the DSPU had followed that directive throughout the strike. Led by the Home Office, several sections of the state including senior police and MI5 had collaborated to follow the same directive, though much more specifically – in a failed attempt to 'get' Arthur Scargill.

Reflections on the Research Questions

The existence and activities of the Leicester Unit indicate that some within the permanent state apparatus were strident Thatcherites and were committed to their leader. Public pronouncements by the nation's chief constables and Special Branch's targeting of left-wing groups identified sections of the British police force as deeply conservative. That the chief constables were more comfortable 'going public' with these biases denotes the existence of new cultural norms, where activity previously deemed politically biased was now normalised. Despite all of that, the evidence in this section demonstrates the guiding hand of Thatcher herself. The Prime Minister pressurised people and agencies to comply – quickly replacing those who did not. The private-sector loyalists of the DSPU also affected those within the permanent state, with their role in setting-up the 'scrutineers' initiative revealing the unit's higher place in the pecking order than their public-sector colleagues – and their ability to dismiss those who were not 'one-of-us.' Those developments gave another example of something new happening under Thatcher – despite those existing state biases. Thatcher's direct involvement, the meddling of the DSPU, the public statements made by the chief constables and the setting-up of the Leicester Unit are all manifestations of authoritarianism and are incompatible with any anti-statist ideology. However, April 1985 saw the ending of the miners' strike. If Hall's assertion concerning authoritarian populism was correct, then surely the authoritarian initiatives deployed against the miners would also be in evidence elsewhere? The next section, Part 3, examines that in more detail.

Part 4: Subversion in Public Life

Introduction

Convened in the early months of 1985 with the miners' strike nearing an end, the Subversion in Public Life (SPL) group was a secret and collaborative effort between multiple state agencies which weaponised sections of the state against political opponents of the sitting Prime Minister in four areas of the public sector. Abandoning distinctions between party and state, senior civil servants, MI5 and the police targeted people working within the rank-and-file civil service, the education sector, local government, and the National Health Service (NHS). The SPL's work was so secretive that its chair reported directly to, and took instruction directly from, Margaret Thatcher. The group bypassed departmental ministers – many of whom did not know of its existence. In 1985, the SPL created a civil service blacklist which was used to covertly keep rank-and-file civil servants away from certain jobs. With the personal backing of the Prime Minister, the group also pressurised managers to enact a purge procedure against civil servants already in sensitive roles. In the education sector, the SPL targeted specific locations, and then used HM Inspectorate to arrange surprise inspections in schools deemed to be under the influence of subversive schoolteachers – in the hope that those inspections might lead to the dismissal of the teachers targeted. In 1987, some of the SPL's blacklisting procedures were rolled-out against local councillors in twelve Labour-controlled local authorities. Members of two NHS trade unions were also targeted.

Many of those who had been involved in the Leicester Unit were involved again in the SPL. As with the Leicester Unit, strict adherence to stealth was a primary concern. Carrying out their operations in secret, the existence and activities of the SPL denote the continuation of the culture of conformity, inspired into existence by the government's responses to the miners' strike but not confined to that dispute. The weaponisation of sections of the state had been normalised by the state's responses to the strike. With the strike defeated, political opponents of the governing party working within four other sectors were rebranded as enemies of the state. However, when Thatcher introduced the 'community charge' in 1989, the culture of conformity became a negative manifestation for the Prime Minister – an echo chamber incapable of preventing the Prime Minister's eventual downfall.

Chapter 11: 'Persistent Troublemakers': The Civil Service Blacklist

After Orgreave in June and the NACODS scare in early November (the proposed shotfirers strike which would have shut down the Nottinghamshire pits and made the strike fully national), Thatcher's loyalists within the state began to concentrate on other political opponents. If they had looked to the Prime Minister's own 'enemy within' speech for earlier indication – then Thatcher's blunt style meant that her remarks, like that earlier speech, needed little interpretation. Despite the early rift with MI5, Thatcher never publicly attacked the Security Service, and also protected the police – elements of both had shown loyalty to the Prime Minister via the Leicester Unit and had also been instrumental in the wider strike. Pensions was an area that saw significant draining of the public purse during the 1980s, but the Prime Minister made no public protestations in that regard. Ministers had warned since 1980 that any cuts to the state pension would hurt the Tories electorally.[1] There were three specific sectors that Thatcher had attacked publicly - local government, the education sector and to a lesser extent, the National Health Service. In all three cases, institutions were regional, provincial or municipal in responsibility. To Thatcher, they were the services most affected by socialism – in the grip of elected Labour councils and trade unions.[2] The Ridley Report had called for a miners' strike to be deliberately instigated. With the defeat of the NUM imminent, the bargaining position of the wider union movement would also be weakened – as predicted by Ridley in 1978.[3] In the NHS, in 1983 Thatcher had appointed a private-sector loyalist, Sainsburys Chief Executive Roy Griffiths. Griffiths' subsequent report found that the NHS's main problem was that there was not enough senior management. In a move that seemed to go against the anti-statist credentials of the Thatcherites, he recruited 200 chief executives and centralised control of the NHS to the Thatcher-appointed public-sector loyalists in Whitehall.[4]

Local government was another area which had attracted the Prime Minister's criticism. The Tories had set-up Urban Development Corporations (UDC) for Liverpool and London in 1981, bypassing hostile Labour councils and awarding grants to the UDC's which were unavailable for council use. Central government had also steadily reduced funding to local authorities since the mid-seventies.[5] Local authorities had depended on central government for 66% of their income in 1975.

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[1] Alan Travis, 'Ministers feared 1980 plan to cut state pension would cause riots, papers show,' *The Guardian* 30th December 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/dec/30/state-pension-geoffrey-howe-margaret-thatcher (Accessed 9th April 2019).
[2] Simon Jenkins. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane 2007), p110.
[3] Report of the Nationalised Industries Policy Group 1978 (the Ridley Report), *Margaret Thatcher Foundation Online*, http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/110795
[4] Ibid, p112.
[5] Alwyn Turner. *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum Press 2013), p189.

By 1984, that percentage had fallen to just over 50%.[6] Faced with a choice between large reductions in services or raising local property charges (known as the rates), most Labour authorities had chosen the latter. However, the Tories' view of the rates was that they were deeply unfair because local businesses were hit the hardest, while some of the financially worse-off did not pay rates at all.[7]

The Conservative government introduced the Rates Act in 1984, which enabled Whitehall to determine maximum budgets for local councils for the first time. 18 councils, 17 of them Labour, became the subject of 'rate-capping.' Rate-capping was met with strong defiance in all 17 areas. In July 1984, the 17 Labour rate-capped councils met in Sheffield to discuss plans to oppose central government. That show of unity meant that, if all 17 councils were defiant and refused to cut their rates, the government might have to surcharge hundreds of councillors. Ken Livingstone, the head of a large London contingent at the Sheffield meeting, had good reason to be fearful. During Thatcher's first administration the leader of Greater London Council (GLC) had annoyed the Prime Minister by festooning the façade of County Hall, opposite Parliament, with monthly London unemployment figures. After the 1983 landslide, Thatcher had begun the process of disbanding the GLC and centralising its power, culminating in the Local Government Act of 1985.[8] Although the abolishment of the GLC was evidence of the Prime Minister's overt power, the Sheffield meeting was also attended by delegates from Liverpool City Council, which had openly defied the practice of rate-capping. Council leader Tony Mulhearn and his deputy Derek Hatton, both members of the Trotskyist group Militant Tendency (MT), had refused to set a lower rate - a move that forced central government to back down and was seen as a defeat for the Tories.[9] Thatcher's enemy within speech given in the same month placed local authorities, and Liverpool in particular, alongside the miners as enemies of the state. Although the miners' strike would have to take president, the Prime Minister and her loyalists within the state would return to local government in its aftermath.

In 1985, Thatcher's hand-picked Whitehall aides were far removed from Britain's rank-and-file civil servants, working in offices throughout the nation. A series of strikes over pay, conditions and service cuts ordered by the DSPU-controlled Scrutineers had put rank-and-file workers at odds with civil servants hand-picked by Thatcher, much higher up and resident in Whitehall. In late 1984, rank-and-file civil servants in Newcastle had begun a pay strike. In November, Permanent Undersecretary for Health and Social Security, Kenneth Stowe (hand-picked by Thatcher), wrote to

[6] Andy McSmith. *Faces of Labour: the Inside Story* (London: Verso 1996), p161.
[7] Ibid, p162.
[8] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p82.
[9] McSmith, *Faces of Labour*, p166.

the Head of the Civil Service, and Cabinet Secretary, Robert Armstrong (also hand-picked), to report on the Newcastle strike.[10] Stowe's report described the Newcastle strike as being secretly run by MT, behind the scenes. Stowe reported that the ringleaders of the strike were in alliance with fellow 'subversives' within the NHS's major trade union (NUPE), as well as MT members in local government in both Newcastle and Liverpool.[11] By linking strike action within the civil service, local government and the NHS, it could be put forward that some sort of central organising committee was behind it. Just as the Leicester Unit had tried unsuccessfully to establish the existence of National Picketing Coordinators and Criminal Damage Organisers, and the DSPU had successfully enlisted the Foreign Office by eliciting the spectre of the Soviet Union, MT could be used as the folk devil behind civil service unrest and, tenuously (apart from Liverpool), local government and the NHS. Targeting the Civil Service first, Stowe told Armstrong that it would be 'helpful if you could bring together the heads of a few of the major employing departments in the civil service, to take stock of the threat.'[12] As well as health, local government and the civil service, Armstrong became aware of a fourth area of interest a fortnight later.

The Prime Minister had never hidden her animosity towards schoolteachers and university lecturers. She had spoken against the influence of left-wing teachers who she accused of 'teaching socialism.'[13] When it came to higher education, Thatcher accused lecturers of brainwashing young people who then 'have every decent value pounded out of them – and at public expense.'[14] Huge cuts to the sector between 1981 and 1986 had a massive effect. Aberdeen University and some London Colleges nearly went bankrupt.[15] A few months before Stowe's correspondence, a DSPU report by Redwood criticised schoolteachers and lecturers who had spoken out against the cuts, labelling them as the 'educational establishment.'[16] In mid-December, Home Office Permanent Secretary Brian Cubbon copied Armstrong into a letter he had sent to MI5's Cecil Shipp to voice his concerns that a 'large-scale infiltration by Militant with a small and large M' had taken place across London's schools.[17] Cubbon told the MI5 man that, for him, 'Militant seems to have replaced the Communist Party as the established focus for subversion within the country.'[18] Cubbon provided evidence for his accusations via an accompanying report, compiled by Permanent Undersecretaries

[10] Peter Hennessy. *Whitehall* (Glasgow: Fontana 1990), p641, 663.
[11] Kenneth Stowe Permanent Undersecretary of Health and Social Security to Robert Armstrong, 23rd November 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p117.
[14] Ibid, p120.
[15] Ibid, p122.
[16] Redwood to Thatcher, 3rd August 1984, *TNA* PREM19/2076.1.
[17] Brian Cubbon Permanent Secretary Home Office to Cecil Shipp MI5, 19th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[18] Ibid.

from the departments of Environment and Education and Science. According to the report, there were 'worrying indications' that 'subversive teachers' in the London area were 'posing a threat to the quality of education.'[19] The report did acknowledge that a recent pay settlement had been seen by many teachers as inadequate. As with the civil service strike action, that was dismissed as the primary cause of discontent. Instead, the report concluded that the reason for low morale in the education sector was the unseen hand of the subversives.

Overtly hostile in tone, the report listed the 'crimes' committed by the observed teachers. Some had '[taken] the day off to support the miners' strike.' [20] Many teaching staff were said to be 'obsessed with egalitarianism and health and safety.'[21] Female teachers were targeted for specific ire. Some had 'defied head-[teachers] to go absent and support the Greenham women.'[22] The writers of the report saved their harshest recrimination for several teachers who were reported to be holding 'excessive discussions on anti-racist and equal opportunities issues.'[23] The undersecretaries also resorted to personal attack in the criticism of their targets. Teachers were attacked for daring to complain about asbestos in school ceilings, were described as 'insidious,' and were charged with failing to maintain a reasonable amount of discipline in their classrooms. [24] The report by the undersecretaries would have been written with its intended audience – senior civil servants such as Armstrong and Cubbon, and perhaps the Prime Minister - in mind. The authors deployed overt partisanship, ideological zeal, and personal attack – in the full knowledge that this was what was expected of them in the continuing culture of conformity.

With four 'subversive' sectors identified, Armstrong convened a meeting with Cubbon and two MI5 officers, Rimington and Shipp, on the 7th January to discuss the next step. All four targeted sectors were discussed. However, most of the meeting was dominated by discussions on the 'subversive threat' within the civil service. One of the attendees brought up the civil service's 'purge procedure.' That was an existing disciplinary procedure written into the employment contracts of all civil servants which stated that a purge could take place if the civil servant was accused of gross misconduct. Cubbon asked whether this could be initiated, in order to purge identified subversives out of the service in one fell swoop.[25] However, Armstrong seemed less than enthusiastic.

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[19] Report by Permanent Undersecretaries Moseley (Environment) and Hancock (Education and Science) included with letter from Brian Cubbon (Home Office) to Cecil Shipp (MI5), 19th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Minutes of Meeting in Armstrong's Office to discuss subversion, 7th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.

Adherence to stealth, which required neither a full-on confrontation nor any attempt to gain legitimisation, had served Thatcher's loyalists well during the miners' strike. The DSPU's adherence to the Ridley Report and the Leicester Unit's targeting of Scargill had all been done covertly. Moreover, Armstrong's own involvement with the prototype SHC as far back as 1972 may have convinced him that a more stealth-like approach was again the way forward. The Cabinet Secretary put forward his own idea. Rather than the blunt instrument of a purge, it might be possible to attack 'subversives' without them ever being aware that they were being targeted. Once identified as subversives, Armstrong argued that it would be possible to 'covertly..move individuals [to other jobs and tasks] where they have less potential for disruption.'[26] That is, strike-leaders and others identified as 'subversives' could be covertly earmarked, kept away from certain 'sensitive' positions and secretly barred from promotion within the sector. Cubbon warned that it would be 'difficult to convince [the identified target's] manager about the reasons for the [covert earmarking].'[27] However, Armstrong, Cubbon and the MI5 officers all agreed that it could be achieved – if they could first identify who, exactly, the subversives were.

A week later, on the 15th January, Armstrong met Cubbon and the MI5 officers again, though this time the list of attendees was increased. The Cabinet Secretary had invited Permanent Secretaries from most of the other government departments to attend. The Cabinet Secretary told his attendees that the government had indicated that it needed more precise information concerning the subversive threat. Specifically, the government had asked for details of the subversives' exact policies, intentions and tactics.[28] Those departments represented at Armstrong's meeting would be expected to help in providing that information for the government. Armstrong announced that a new interdepartmental group, the Subversion in Public Life group (SPL), would be formed. The SPL would work in conjunction with MI5, which would also be represented within the SPL via officers Stella Rimington and Cecil Shipp – the former of whom was well-used to inter-agency collaboration of this sort because of her influential role in the setting-up of the Leicester Unit. Shipp was an MI5 stalwart who usually worked from Washington as the Security Service's Liaison Officer to the CIA and FBI, where he had gained a fierce reputation as an interrogator and counter-espionage expert.[29] Each of the permanent secretaries gathered was expected to second a reliable undersecretary to join the SPL. As for the permanent secretaries themselves, they would form a secondary overseeing group, the Subversion Home Committee (SHC), which would meet periodically

[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Minutes of Meeting in Armstrong's Office to discuss subversion, 15th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[29] Stella Rimington. *Open Secret* (London: Arrow 2002), p157.

to discuss the activities and reports of the SPL. Rather than report to their own departmental ministers, the overseeing SHC group would report directly to the Prime Minister.[30]

All present agreed to the reforming of both groups, with MI5's Director General John Jones remarking that, alongside the seconding of Rimington and Shipp, his organisation was 'very ready to agree to this and provide material.'[31] Jones, like Armstrong, had been involved in the original group in 1972. The SPL and the overseeing SHC were much larger in size and scope when compared with 1972. That year, The SPL had been chaired by Armstrong. However, that had been a small, four-man team. In 1985, the SPL would have fifteen members. As well as Shipp and Rimington, a Special Branch officer, CV Hewitt was included.[32] The other twelve members of the SPL would be civil servants – undersecretaries and deputies from a host of different departments including the Ministry of Defence, Education and Science, Employment, the Cabinet Office, the Scottish Office, Health and Social Security, and the Home Office. The Home Office would provide two members of the SPL. Head of Counterterrorism Roy Harrington and Police Department Chairman David Hilary were both recruited. Both had worked alongside Rimington in the setting-up and running of the Leicester Unit. In 1972, the overseeing SHC had seven permanent members. In 1985, the overseers' group was double the size – with fourteen. As well as Armstrong and permanent secretaries from all of the departments represented in the SPL, that included two further MI5 officers - Anthony Duff and Royd Barker.[33] Other SHC members were the Thatcher-appointees Kenneth Stowe and Clive Whitmore, as well as the writers of the polemical report on schoolteachers discussed earlier, George Moseley and David Hancock. Given that Armstrong would now be chairing the overseeing SHC group, he needed someone to take on the role that he had had in 1972 – Chair of the SPL. Armstrong would need someone with experience collecting information against 'subversive' enemies of the state – someone who to use Thatcher's oft-used phrase, was 'one of us.' The Cabinet Secretary had someone in mind.

After his involvement in the formation and running of the Leicester Unit, Deputy Undersecretary of State Michael Partridge had returned to other duties within the Home Office. The Leicester Unit had not been able to provide the dossier of evidence to convict Scargill. However, Partridge's attempts to do so earmarked him as a committed loyalist, a man who could be used to undertake activities which others might deem beyond the remit of a supposedly non-partisan senior civil servant. As such, he, alongside Harrington and Hilary, fitted the bill for Armstrong's revival of

[30] Minutes of Meeting of Subversion (Home) Committee, 27th November 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[31] Minutes of Meeting in Armstrong's Office to discuss subversion, 15th January 1985, CAB301/485
[32] First Report of the Subversion in Public Life Group, copied to all SHC members, 14th August 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[33] Minutes of Meeting in Armstrong's Office to discuss subversion, 15th January 1985, CAB301/485

the SPL. On the 18th January, Armstrong sent letters to all of the permanent secretaries to be included in both groups.[34] As Armstrong reflected, 'most of you were involved last time [in 1972], so you are all invited to be involved again.'[35] Armstrong announced that he had chosen Partridge as the new Chair of the SPL. Partridge would also be a member of the overseeing SHC. During each intermittent SHC meeting, he would be able to give face-to-face reports to the permanent secretaries about the activities of the SPL – alongside the written reports.

Over the course of the next week, every department sent their agreement to be part of the SPL, with each permanent secretary nominating an undersecretary to be involved.[36] With that, Partridge was told to arrange the first SPL meeting as soon as possible. As for the overseeing SHC, with the SPL sub-group doing all of the legwork, there was no need for the overseers to meet again until the SPL had carried out its first raft of counter-subversion and compiled an appropriate report. It was agreed that SHC would reconvene in six months' time – at which time Partridge should have plenty to say about the SPL's activities in the meantime.[37] Armstrong drew-up the SHC's new terms of reference - '[t]o advise ministers, as necessary, on appropriate measures to counter subversive activities in the United Kingdom…and to oversee the work of Subversion in Public Life.' [38] The SHC, then, acted as a bridge between the Prime Minister and the SPL. With ongoing strikes in several locations, it was agreed that the SPL's first target should be the civil service. By the end of January, with the miners' strike nearing defeat and the Leicester Unit soon to be disbanded, Thatcher's public-sector loyalists had revived the SPL, substantially increased its membership, and set the organisation to target strike action within the civil service. If any of the SPL members were unsure about the nature of their remit, Armstrong issued guidance in the form of a memorandum in February. The SHC Chair reminded all civil servants that they were above-all servants of the Crown, that the Crown was represented by the government of the day, and that Whitehall 'has no constitutional personality or responsibility separate from the duly constituted Government of the day.'[39]

On the 14th August 1985, after six months in operation, the SPL issued its first full report. Written by SPL chair Michael Partridge, the report was issued to all members of the overseeing SHC,

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[34] Armstrong sends letter to all relevant departments 18th January 1985, CAB301/485.
[35] Ibid.
[36] All PSS'S confirm agreement over next week, Letters to Armstrong from all Departments 19th January-25th January 1985, CAB301/485.
[37] Cubbon to Armstrong 30th January 1985, CAB301/485.
[38] Terms of Reference for SHC, 28th September 1988, CAB301/485.
[39] The Armstrong Memorandum 25th February 1985, *Civilservant.org.uk.* https://www.civilservant.org.uk/library/1996_Armstrong_Memorandum.pdf (Accessed 19th March 2019).

before being passed directly to the Prime Minister.[40] The main activity that the SPL had undertaken, during its first six months in operation, was the compiling of an extensive blacklist across all departments of the civil service. Unlike in 1972, when the Conservative state had had to turn to the Economic League, by 1985 the SPL and MI5 had no need for outside help. The new blacklist was remarkable for its attention to detail. The SPL was able to provide tables showing the exact numbers of identified 'subversives' in each department. Precise figures were given for specific groups, such as Militant and the Socialist Workers' Party. Said to be accurate for the end of 1984, the blacklist contained details of 1,420 civil servants. Once on the list, the civil servant in question could be covertly banned from promotions and kept away from sensitive tasks, as Armstrong had suggested. However, the tables revealed that it was remarkably easy to get put onto one of the lists. The SPL report explained that those on the list were either a member of a subversive organisation (under the new manipulated definition), someone deemed to have 'expressed sympathy' with one of the groups in the past, or someone with a family member involved – even if they themselves were not.[41]

Partridge outlined how the SPL had defined the term 'subversion,' before undertaking its activities. Although the definition from MI5's Charter had been accepted by the original incarnation of the SPL in 1972, reflected Partridge, it had been decided that it would not suffice for 1985. The SPL Chair admitted that the new interpretation of 'subversion' was indeed a 'wide definition.'[42] However, Partridge had gained justification right from the top. As he explained, 'ministers have resisted all calls for [the definition] to be applied only to unlawful activity.'[43] Those unnamed ministers had criticised the old definition, which had, according to them, 'allow[ed] too much scope to subversive organisations who take care to keep within the law, and who profess their intention of achieving power by legal and constitutional means, but whose real aims are the destruction of the present system.'[44] Under the SPL's new definition, anybody said to subscribe to an 'anti-democratic philosophy' could be labelled as a subversive and therefore become a target - whether they were deemed to threaten the safety of the state or not. Just like the term 'subversion,' however, the exact definition of an 'anti-democratic ideology' seemed open to interpretation. Under the new definition, the broader left in general were identified as subversives. For instance, Partridge revealed that the SPL had targeted 'the Eurocommunists.'[45] The Undersecretary conceded that the Eurocommunists

[40] Minutes of Meeting of Subversion (Home) Committee, 27th November 1985, TNA Kew, CAB301/485.
[41] First Report of the Subversion in Public Life Group, 14th August 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485. Appendix 3 for full details. (All subsequent references to the first report as SPL1.)
[42] SPL's Chair Partridge accompanying letter to SHC's Chair Armstrong, with 1st Full Report, 27th November 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485, p3.
[43] Ibid, p4.
[44] Ibid, p5.
[45] SPL1, p3.

were neither violent, nor anti-democratic. Under the new definition, stated Partridge, the SPL had decided that the Eurocommunists could be - and had been – blacklisted nevertheless, included in with the figures for the communists.[46]

The tables produced by the SPL in August 1985 were evidence of some of the most extensive blacklisting carried out by the British state on its own people. The report was far more detailed than anything produced by the Economic League in the seventies. Further tables were produced breaking down each individual 'subversive' ideology, the organisations said to adhere to that ideology, and the exact number of civil servants said to be members or sympathisers with that organisation. Evidence of the scale of the blacklisting operation can be seen by the fact that the SPL was also able to provide a further list of suspected subversives *nationwide* – across all public and private sectors, though without the specifics of the civil service blacklist. Militant Tendency was given particular attention. The report was able to reveal that, overall, Trotskyist groups constituted the biggest number of subversives in wider society (16,170) with MT the biggest amongst those (6,300).[47] Despite the miners' strike ending five months earlier, Thatcher's public-sector loyalists had not forgotten their old enemies. The report attacked the NUM as being under the 'significant influence' of left-wing, subversive elements.[48] Mick McGahey was correctly named as a member of the Communist Party. Communists were blamed by the report for nearly every industrial dispute in recent British history. According to the report, 'Communists have played a significant role in every coal strike since 1970, the 1982 rail strike, Grunwick and the Warrington Messenger dispute.'[49] Moreover, organisations such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) and the Anti-Apartheid Campaign against segregated South Africa were all said to be infiltrated by Communist Party members.[50] The report conceded that, within those organisations, most people had no affiliation with the CPGB whatsoever. However, the fact that they 'might support individual policies' of the Communist Party meant that they had still been added to the blacklist.[51] That 'guilty by association' justification had been used by SPL members Rimington, Harrington and Hilary in the past. MI5's targeting of the Greenham women, the DSPU's justification for Foreign Office involvement in the strike, and the Leicester Unit's targeting of Scargill had all been justified in the same manner. Although such justification might not stand up to scrutiny, it did not have to. Like the DSPU and the Leicester Unit before it, the SPL's activities were secret and therefore outright legitimisation was not sought or required. The section about communists ended

[46] SPL1, p3.
[47] SPL1, Appendix 1.
[48] SPL1, p4.
[49] SP11, p4.
[50] SPL1, p5.
[51] SPL1, p5.

with an attack on the prominent British historian, Eric Hobsbawm. The historian was described as particularly dangerous, as he had 'attracted a large student following.'[52] The fact that Hobsbawm was a university lecturer, whose profession required interaction with students, was not commented upon.

As well as the civil service blacklist and the section on wider society, the report also identified other areas which might, in the future, require the same level of scrutiny as the civil service had received in the SPL's initial report. The report advised that the SPL was not worried about either the police or the armed forces, which were described as having pre-existing vetting procedures which had 'virtually excluded subversives' from either force.[53] However, both Education and the NHS were highlighted as areas where 'subversives [could] call strike action and cause other disruption.'[54] The Labour Party was highlighted as being at risk from subversive entryists.[55] Summarising the SPL's civil service blacklist, the Trotskyists were picked out for particular scrutiny. According to the report, Trotskyists 'do currently pose a significant subversive threat on a national scale. The civil service, nationalised industries, NHS, education, local government and the Labour Party are most at risk from their activities.'[56]

Aware of the embarrassment the report might raise if it were ever made public, Partridge told Armstrong that the SPL had done its best to keep MI5 free from any 'political bias.'[57] Partridge revealed that he was satisfied that impartiality had been achieved - once one allowed for the new definition of subversion, which had been widened to include, as the SPL Chair put it, those who engage in 'activities which are hostile *to the government and its policies*, but not intended to overthrow democracy [my emphasis].'[58] This was a telling turn-of-phrase by Partridge. For the first time, the SPL Chair admitted that those hostile to 'the government' had been deemed to be subversives. As with Scargill and the NUM, political opponents of the governing Conservative Party were recast as enemies of the state, with little or no distinction. Those political opponents' personal details were placed on a blacklist which might be harmful to their future careers – though they would never know about it. Many civil servants with links to the specified organisations may indeed have held revolutionary ideals. However, the compiling of the SPL report had been undertaken in the

[52] SPL1, p6.
[53] SPL1, p14.
[54] SPL1, p15.
[55] SPL1, p15.
[56] SPL1, p16.
[57] SPL's Chair Partridge accompanying letter to SHC's Chair Armstrong, with 1st Full Report, 27th November 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485, p5.
[58] Ibid, p5.

full knowledge that many of those blacklisted were not revolutionaries, had no intention of operating outside of the law, and were often linked tenuously to one of the left-wing organisations.

The SPL Chair was less than hostile towards right-wing targets on the blacklist. Partridge argued that the right-wing threat was small, only 4,000 out of an estimated 50,000 across all of the four industries.[59] Even amongst those, Partridge was keen to point out that, unlike their left-wing counterparts, 'not all members [of the National Front and British National Party] hold subversive views.'[60] That attempt to play-down the significance of right-wing subversives was in stark contrast when juxtaposed against SPL activity and attitudes toward left-wing subversives. With regard to the Left, every effort was made to broaden the net. On the Right, the opposite occurred. When fascist groups were occasionally mentioned by the SPL, it was almost always to play down the threat. Many on the far-right admired Thatcher's perceived hard-line stances on race and crime.[61] They were not necessarily opponents of the Conservative Party and therefore, according to Partridge's own stated interpretation, not necessarily subversive. Dismissing the far-right, Partridge concluded that 'only the CPGB, MT, WRP and SWP pose a significant subversive threat on a national scale.'[62] Submitting the SPL's report to Armstrong and the permanent secretaries of the SHC for their consideration, Partridge offered the opinion that the SPL might move its blacklisting operations into some of the other identified sectors – specifically the NHS and local government.[63] Always aware of the need for stealth, the Undersecretary did warn that it might not be possible to undertake blacklisting in those sectors as 'covertly as ha[d] been possible for the civil service.'[64]

When the SPL had been formed in January 1985, the miners' strike was still under way. The strike's end, after the NUM's eventual defeat in March, can perhaps be used as explanation as to why the overseeing group – the SHC - did not meet to discuss the SPL report for five months. In the mean-time, in July 1985, senior civil servants including those working within the SPL had had their own round of pay negotiations. At the same time as rank-and-file were striking in Newcastle and being covertly blacklisted, the Top Salaries Review Body recommended large inflation-busting increases for the Thatcher-appointees in the top grades doing the blacklisting such as Partridge, Harrington and Hilary - of between 12 and 18 percent.[65] Chancellor Nigel Lawson was alarmed with

[59] Ibid, p6.
[60] Ibid, p6.
[61] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), p296.
[62] SPL's Chair Partridge accompanying letter to SHC's Chair Armstrong, with 1st Full Report, 27th November 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485, p6.
[63] Ibid, p2.
[64] Ibid, p2.
[65] Nigel Lawson. *The View From Number 11* (London: Bantam Press 1993), p394.

the big increases and challenged the Prime Minister directly – singling out SHC Chair Armstrong who was in line for a 46 percent pay-rise. Lawson attempted to convince the Prime Minister that the senior civil servants' pay negotiations should be part of the overall arrangements – including those of the rank-and-file. [66] Lawson's argument might be taken as evidence that the Chancellor was completely unaware of the activities of the SPL. Lawson was dismayed when Thatcher personally overruled him and pushed the senior pay-rises through.[67]

On the 27th November 1985, Armstrong convened the permanent secretaries of the SHC in Conference Room C of the Cabinet Office at Whitehall, to discuss the report and blacklisting activities of the SPL. Before considering the main thrust of the report, the permanent secretaries went off on a tangent, accusing the education sector of being riddled with subversive influence in the classrooms – particularly in London which was said to be heavily infiltrated by Militant Tendency.[68] The Permanent Secretary of Education and Science, David Hancock, was present. Although he was quick to join the condemnation of the subversives, he did concede that 'there was no evidence as yet of teachers indoctrinating children.'[69] With regard to the civil service blacklist, SHC members offered high praise. Armstrong announced that for him, the report was further proof that the DHSS strike in Newcastle was being 'masterminded by subversives,' three of whom were on the blacklist.[70] Armstrong then cast light onto the exact chain of command in relation to the SPL and SHC. In an unusual move, the SHC Chair told the other permanent secretaries that they should not discuss the SPL's report with their own departmental ministers due to its high sensitivity. Instead, Armstrong had been instructed to deliver the report directly to Thatcher.[71] Cabinet Office Undersecretary and SPL member Rex Davie was at the meeting as a note-taking secretary. He told the group that this was highly unusual and that, following the proper chain of command and constitutional propriety, the appropriate ministers would usually be informed. That was dismissed by several members of the SHC, who used the justification that 'the Prime Minister might not wish to see it go any wider.'[72] That disclosure explained Chancellor Nigel Lawson's apparent obliviousness concerning the existence of the SPL. In the minutes, none of the assembled permanent secretaries voiced any opposition to the move to exclude the ministers. Armstrong was as good as his word. In early December, the Cabinet Secretary sent the SPL report directly to the Prime Minister, with his

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid, p395.
[68] Minutes of Meeting of Subversion (Home) Committee, 27th November 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

own, accompanying list of recommendations agreed by the SHC.[73] Armstrong's own recommendation was to echo Partridge - the SPL's blacklisting technique should now be broadened into other sectors, with MI5 resources used again to complete the task.[74] When communicating with the Prime Minister directly, Armstrong revealed that the SPL had widened the catchment net for prospective political opponents further - to include those who could not be labelled as subversive even under the new definition. The SHC Chair told Thatcher that the work of the SPL had been undertaken with the aim of 'ensuring that subversives are not posted to [jobs] in key areas and that persistent troublemakers, whether subversives or not, are identified and removed.'[75] Armstrong's answer to the often tenuous linking of those targeted to 'subversion' was to use the even vaguer terminology of 'troublemaker,' without any further description of what might constitute that label. With his intended audience in mind, Armstrong might have felt that the term would be well received – taking its place alongside 'the wreckers,' 'the enemy within,' and 'the subversives.'

On the 9th December, Armstrong received a reply from the Head of the Prime Minister's Office and Thatcher's Principal Private Secretary, Nigel Wicks. Wicks was new to the role of Private Secretary, though he had worked in the Prime Minister's Office under Thatcher's two Labour predecessors. He also had links to Big Oil – having worked directly for BP as a young man before joining the civil service.[76] Wicks told Armstrong that Thatcher had approved of the SPL report. Regarding Armstrong's proposal of extending the blacklisting activity, the Private Secretary revealed that 'the Prime Minister agrees that you should proceed with the…initiatives.'[77] Wicks told Armstrong that Thatcher approved of the blacklisting, but that she felt that it did not go far enough. After studying the figures and tables in the SPL report, the Prime Minister had told Wicks that she was 'somewhat disquieted to learn that there are some subversives above the rank of HEO.'[78] The Prime Minister wanted Armstrong to be aware that 'one further action to counter the subversive threat in the Civil Service would be for management to be very ready to sack subversive troublemakers' with immediate effect.[79] Thatcher gave the go-ahead for the SPL to broaden the group's blacklisting exercise into the other areas already labelled as under suspicion. Wicks confirmed that '[s]he also thinks it would be worthwhile for [the SPL] to make a similar assessment

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[73] Armstrong accompanying letter to Thatcher, 6th December 1985, *TNA Kew,* CAB301/485.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid - My Italics.
[76] 'Profile of Sir Nigel Wicks,' *Bloomberg.Com*. https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/person.asp?personId=22497062&privcapId=874319 (Accessed 10th January 2018).
[77] Nigel Wicks Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, to Armstrong, 9th December 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

of the current threat of subversion in local government, education and the NHS.'[80] The only criticism Thatcher had levelled was that the SPL did not go far enough and that outright sackings of identified subversives should be brought about in the civil service.

Armstrong relayed Thatcher's comments down the chain of command to Partridge and the SPL.[81] The SPL Chair seemed to have anticipated such positive feedback. He informed Armstrong that he had already been in touch with MI5 about further 'assessments' which could be undertaken in the other specified sectors.[82] The SPL Chair did remind the permanent secretaries of the ever-present adherence to stealth, reflecting that 'knowledge of the SPL and its activities needed to be kept within a restricted circle.'[83] Anticipating and disregarding any charges of partisan activity, Partridge argued that the blacklisting procedure needed 'to be seen to be no more than the good and sound management that it is.'[84] Partridge also revealed that he himself had the ear of the Prime Minister, though some ministers remained oblivious to the work of the SPL. The Chair revealed that 'the Prime Minister has been informed. However, other ministers have not yet been brought into the picture.'[85] The SPL reported, through the overseeing SHC, directly to Thatcher.

Three months later, in April 1986, Partridge wrote to Armstrong to inform him that 'subversive'-led prospective strike action was being planned in the DHSS in London.[86] In preparation, senior management within the London offices had been 'made fully aware of the Prime Minister's expressed approval for vigorous management action against subversive troublemakers.'[87] That is, Thatcher herself had given the go-ahead for the dismissal of those identified as 'troublemakers.' A week later, Armstrong wrote to Thatcher to confirm that the Prime Minister's own comment about 'disciplinary sanctions had been passed along.'[88]

[80] Ibid.
[81] Armstrong to Partridge 11th December 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[82] Partridge to Armstrong, 13th December 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Partridge to Armstrong, 10th March 1986, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Armstrong to Thatcher 18th March 1986, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.

Chapter 12: 'Obliged to Dismiss': Targeting London's Schoolteachers

By 1987, economic decline and growing inequality had continued unabated for those on the other side of Thatcher's polarised Britain. Although unemployment had fallen on official figures, it still stood at three million.[1] Liverpool continued to be one of the hardest-hit areas. The city had become symbolic of the depressed north – ravaged by areas of extreme poverty and the epicentre of local government revolt in 1985-86. The Labour Party, led by centrist Neil Kinnock, offered little protection for the outsiders in Thatcher's revolution. The party leadership seemed unable or unwilling to challenge the Tories in regard to increasing inequality, the running down of public services or the reduction in social housing. For the Thatcherites, each of those was proudly proclaimed as an achievement, rather than a failure.[2] For Thatcher's supporters – particularly in the City and within the private-sector, things had never been better. 1987 saw the high point of the ideologically-driven, eight-year wave of Thatcher's privatisation of public services. British Aerospace and Cable and Wireless had been privatised in 1981, National Freight in 1982.[3] Jaguar, Sealink and British Telecom went in 1984.[4] British Gas and British Airways followed in 1986.[5] Finally, Rolls-Royce and David Pascall's British Petroleum in 1987.[6] Overall, 28 publicly-owned assets were sold off between 1980 and 1987. In all cases, the biggest losers seemed to be their employees. The process of 'rationalisation' involved massively reducing the workforce in anticipation of selling off the company.[7] By the time British Steel was sold off in 1988, 70% of jobs were already lost.[8]

Accompanying the wave of privatisation was a widescale deregulation of the finance sector in the City of London. That had been confirmed in October 1986, with the so-called 'Big Bang.' Fixed commission was abolished and corporate membership of the Stock Exchange was permitted for the first time. Traditional 'open-cry' trading floors were replaced by computer screens.[9] For those that worked within the City, it seemed as if they had suddenly been given what the Thatcherites had always said there was no such thing as – money for nothing. The average income for a director at city bank Morgan Grenfell had been £40,000-per-year in 1979. By the end of 1986, it was £225,000.[10] For another large trader, Cazenove, Director Pay multiplied sevenfold over the same

[1] Alwyn Turner. *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum Press 2013), p225.
[2] Ibid, p226.
[3] Peter Hennessy. *Whitehall* (Glasgow: Fontana 1990), p501.
[4] Ibid,
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Turner, '*Rejoice! Rejoice*, p229.
[8] Ibid, p228.
[9] Ibid, p226.
[10] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009), p186.

period.[11] The crossovers between the city traders and the Conservative Party were manifest. Both Cazenove and NM Rothschild executives were personally close to Thatcher, and both firms were large Tory donors.[12] The revolving door went the other way, too. John Redwood, the former Leader of the DSPU, had never stopped claiming a salary from NM Rothschild during his miners' strike secondment. With the strike long over, the bank created a department for both him and another former DSPU man, Oliver Letwin, who would tour the rest of the world selling privatisation abroad.[13] Within the City, a new atmosphere of the 'Club for Rich Young Men' prevailed.[14] Mostly aged between 26 and 35, this new wave of stockbrokers were taking home £100,000-per-year, before bonuses.[15]

Against this backdrop came the SPL's second report, issued in February 1987. That report, and the responses to it, showed those who had weaponised sections of the state were less cautious about the secret nature of their work for the first time. In 1987, Nicholas Ridley's attention had shifted onto education. The Environment Minister, who had remained one of Thatcher's closest advisors, devised and implemented a policy to let schools 'opt out' of local authority control and be run by their governors.[16] Here was a way to attack those deemed subversive in both the education sector and local government - simultaneously. Rubbishing claims that the education sector was struggling due to cuts made by the Conservative government, Ridley complained that teachers needed to 'get back to the Three R's and teach more British History.'[17] That might have been well received by the Prime Minister – herself a former Education Minister under Heath. Ridley's 'opting out' policy was, unusually for the Environment Minister, a move away from the stealth which he had proscribed since 1978. With regard to the covert targeting of political opponents, the SPL's second report, issued in February 1987, revealed that the group had undertaken much more activity in the education sector and had attempted to bring about the dismissal of an unknown number of schoolteachers in London. Responding to Thatcher's instruction to 'sack,' the SPL had also developed an existing purge procedure within the civil service to be used against political 'subversives.'

Partridge highlighted a problem that the SPL had encountered when targeting education, local government and the NHS. Unlike with the civil service, the group 'did not have access to the names and records of people in the other three areas.'[18] Moreover, there was 'no means of getting

[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, 185.
[13] Ibid, 198.
[14] Ibid, 185.
[15] Ibid, 186.
[16] Nicholas Ridley. *My Style of Government: The Thatcher Years* (London: Hutchinson 1991), p94.
[17] Ibid, p92.
[18] SPL2, p6.

[that information] without…a high risk of public exposure.'[19] The SPL had overcome that issue, explained the report, by substituting the quantitative method of nationwide blacklisting with a more qualitative approach. The report revealed that in education, monitoring had constituted a 'selective dipstick' focused on 'particular areas and individuals that [the SPL] thought might contain subversive activity.'[20] With the help of MI5, certain locations or institutions thought to be either under the influence of subversives or vulnerable to subversion had been pre-selected. Back in December 1984, Armstrong had received a report which concluded that teachers in London were overwhelmingly politically-opposed to Thatcher.[21] No methodology appears to have been used in choosing the area to be used for the 'dipstick,' other than the targeting of areas deemed left-wing by the SPL – in the first instance, London. The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) was denounced for featuring a particular 'hard-left approach.'[22] The London branch of the teachers' union, the NUT, had also been targeted. The union was said to be under 'significant Trotskyist influence.'[23] Partridge conceded the possibility that 'a public body may adopt hard-left policies and take up a thoroughly uncooperative stance in its dealings with central government for non-subversive reasons.'[24] The report admitted that schoolteachers named via the dipstick technique 'appear[ed] to act responsibly in schools,' despite their 'subversive' affiliations.[25] Those admissions had not, however, prevented the SPL from targeting the ILEA. Once the targets had been identified, another, more specific technique had been deployed.

Leon Brittan had privately enlisted another agency of the state into the search for subversion, HM Inspectorate of Schools, in February 1985. The then Home Secretary had told inspectors that 'a worrying amount of NUM propaganda [had] found its way into school classrooms.'[26] The school inspectors had continued to be useful. The SPL's second report revealed that between August 1985 and February 1987, at the behest of the SPL, HM Inspectorate had been sent into specified schools in London, identified as under subversive influence during the dipstick phase.[27] The point of these 'surprise inspections,' revealed the report, was to find evidence which would make the Local Education Authority 'obliged to dismiss the subversive teachers.'[28] It was not

[19] SPL2, p6.
[20] SPL2, p3.
[21] Report by George Moseley (PUSS Environment) and David Hancock (PUSS Education and Science) included with letter from Brian Cubbon (Home Office) to Cecil Shipp (MI5), 19th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[22] SPL2, p6.
[23] SPL2, p6.
[24] SPL2, p6.
[25] SPL2, p6.
[26] Pantling minutes of meeting between Brittan and regional HMI Inspectors, 5th February 1985, *TNA Kew*, HO504/35.
[27] SPL2, p7.
[28] SPL2, p7.

recorded how many times the SPL ordered HM Inspectorate to carry out those surprise inspections, or how many people might have lost their jobs as a result. Though not commenting on education specifically, the Prime Minister had pushed the SPL towards achieving sackings in the civil service. It might be taken that she would also approve of the same outcome in education, a sector she had often accused of brainwashing children.[29] Like the civil servants before them, the schoolteachers were oblivious that they were being targeted by the state. In February 1988 a year after the second report of the SPL, Thatcher announced that the ILEA would be dissolved – a move seen by enemies and allies alike as a strike against political opponents.[30] What nobody knew at the time was that the organisation and its schoolteachers had been covertly targeted by the SPL for several months.

The second report revealed that, with the help of MI5, the civil service blacklist had been expanded across the entire service - including those departments not listed in the first report. Despite that, in terms of overall numbers within the civil service, the 'subversive threat' was about the same as it had been at the time of the first report, 18 months earlier. That discrepancy would seem to indicate that while the blacklists had been successful in 'moving [troublemakers] sideways,' and covertly steering them clear of areas deemed 'sensitive,' it was much harder to actually sack someone for subversion – given the loose definition of the term and how easy it appeared to be to get onto the blacklist.[31] However, the Prime Minister had made her feelings clear in the aftermath of the first report. The purge procedure, which was written into civil service contracts but was only supposed to be used in cases of gross misconduct, had been mentioned at a meeting chaired by Armstrong back in January 1985.[32] The second report revealed that the SPL had worked with senior management and covertly changed the rule so that the purge could now be enacted in cases of subversion. Partridge justified the SPL's interference by telling Armstrong that 'civil servants owe their allegiance to the crown…[and] the authority of the crown is exercised by the government of the day.'[33] The SPL Chair gave exact details of the procedure. Once a civil servant had been accused by a manager of subversion, s/he faced immediate suspension. Once accused and suspended, only two courses of action were available to her/him. In the first instance, they could accept all charges and face the disciplinary ramifications. Alternatively, if they denied the charge of subversion, then they would go in front of a panel known as 'the Three Advisors.'[34] That meant going before a court-like panel of three senior managers, who would act as judges. In her/his defence, the accused could call

[29] Simon Jenkins. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane 2007), p117.
[30] Ibid, p132.
[31] Second Report of the SPL, 6th February 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486, p1. All subsequent references to second report as SPL2.
[32] Minutes of Meeting in Armstrong's Office to discuss subversion, 7th January 1985, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/485.
[33] SPL2, Appendix A
[34] SPL2, Appendix A

witnesses to testify to the Three Advisors about their prior record, reliability and character.[35] However, the Advisors' decision was final. If they upheld the accusation of subversion, the civil servant might be posted or retrained elsewhere – away from sensitive areas.[36] Where that was not possible, the accused would be dismissed – unless they agreed to resign.[37] Partridge included in the report an extract from a standard civil servant contract which gave details of the Three Advisors/Purge procedure as it already existed. As stated, however, the purge procedure was only meant to be used in cases of gross misconduct. The SPL report stated that the group had insisted that managers also enact the procedure in cases of subversion – though no figures were given in regard to how many times that had occurred.[38]

The Purge Procedure worked doubly well for the SPL. On the one hand it reinforced the culture of conformity. Many civil servants, worried about losing their jobs, might well have accepted a move sideways or downwards, suitably chastised about any political dissention. Those that did not could be sacked – allowing the loyalists within the SPL to report to Thatcher that her advice regarding 'outright sackings' had been implemented. As discussed, ending up on the blacklist was not difficult. Despite the specific nature of the purge procedure, it seemed just as easy to become a target. As Partridge explained, the purge could be triggered if 'a doubt arises' about someone engaged in 'secret work.'[39]

The SPL's second report had also commented on local government – in Labour strongholds. Manchester, Liverpool and several East London boroughs were identified as subversive 'hubs.' It was admitted that 'opposition to central government seemed to stem more from political than subversive motives,' though, it was concluded, 'the significant exception is Liverpool.'[40] The logistics of the exercise meant that SPL had not been able to undertake more specific counter-subversion in the same way as it had done in education and the civil service. Central information for local councillors did not exist. The group had considered deploying MI5 to the regions specified to collate the information, but in the end felt it 'too risky' in regard to the stealth approach.[41] Similarly, the NHS had been looked at by the SPL – but little more than that. Partridge stated that the 'risk of obtaining information [about subversives within the NHS] would be unacceptably high.'[42] Adherence to stealth was amplified in a sector as well loved by the British public as the Health Service. With the

[35] SPL2, Appendix A
[36] SPL2: Appendix A
[37] SPL2: Appendix A.
[38] SPL2, p1.
[39] Partridge accompanying note on Purge Procedure, to Armstrong, 16th February 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[40] SPL2, p4.
[41] SPL2, p5.
[42] SPL2, p8.

Tories riding high in the polls and Thatcher expected to call an election, it did not make sense to risk counter-subversion in the NHS, nor undertake the logistically difficult task of compiling a full local government blacklist. As such, the SPL left it up to the overseeing SHC as to whether the procedures and activity in education and the civil service should be expanded into those other two sectors.

Given the longstanding adherence to stealth, Partridge and the SPL might well have been dismayed to learn that, on the same day that the second report was released, 6th February 1987, a list of 269 'subversives within the civil service' had been leaked to the press. SPL member and Cabinet Office Undersecretary Rex Davie wrote to Armstrong to warn that the disclosure was a 'difficult area open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation.'[43] The leaked blacklist had been given to an unnamed newspaper man who had, in turn, given it to Tory MP for Hastings and Rye, Kenneth Warren. Sending the list directly to Thatcher, Warren used the polemic, partisan and even theatrical language evident in the prose of the Prime Minister's loyalists. Warren thought the list of civil service subversives merely 'the tip of the iceberg' in regard to left-wing 'infiltration' of the British public sector.[44] The Tory MP paid no mind whatsoever as to why and how such a list had been compiled. Instead, Warren argued that 'we cannot tolerate militants being given sensitive positions.'[45] Thatcher could not tell the backbencher about the activities of the SPL. She did write a reply to him in which she assured him that 'departments are alert to the dangers represented by people who hold extreme views.'[46]

Armstrong convened the Permanent Secretaries of the SHC on the 13th March to discuss the SPL's second report - and the leak. The Cabinet Secretary defended the SPL and distanced the group from the leaked blacklist. He told the others categorically that the 'list does not represent a leak of material prepared by the SPL.'[47] Armstrong did not appear to consider the question that if the secret list did not come from the SPL, who else, or which other possible organisation, would have both the incentive and the capabilities (via MI5) to produce such a list? It did not seem likely that a secondary secret organisation was also working with MI5 to produce blacklists of civil servants. In any case the leak was made on the same day that the SPL report was issued – which seemed an unlikely coincidence. Unless, therefore, the leak had emanated directly from MI5, it seems probable that it must have come from either a member of SPL, or a member of the overseeing SHC, the latter of whom would have been sat round the table with Armstrong when he defended the SPL in the matter. The leak might have been made by a triumphalist member of either organisation, believing

[43] Rex Davie to Armstrong, 16th February 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[44] Kenneth Warren MP to Thatcher, 16th February 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486
[45] Ibid.
[46] Thatcher reply to Warren, 5th March 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[47] SHC Meeting Brief, issued before meeting takes place, 5th March 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.

that the list would, through the prism of the right-wing press, be regarded as a propaganda victory for the government, rather than an embarrassment. In either case, a deliberate leak to the press represented a move away from strict adherence to stealth. That less cautious approach was a definitive move away from SHC policy stretching back to 1972 under Heath. Moreover, adherence to stealth had been the cornerstone of both the DSPU and the Leicester Unit during the miners' strike, as well as SPL activity up until that point. After the Leicester Unit's existence was uncovered by a journalist in October 1984, the civil servants involved had scrambled to limit the damage and distance themselves from the Unit's activities. The leak of a list of 'subversive' civil servants, which might have been seen as disastrous in 1984, had caused little alarm in 1987.

The permanent secretaries of the SHC had been universally positive about the original SPL report in August 1985. However, their reactions to the second report were rather more mixed. Counter-subversion methods were praised, particularly in the civil service and education. However, the SPL faced criticism that it had not gone far enough – particularly in local government and the health service. The whole section on local government was disparaged as 'superficial.'[48] The permanent secretaries were particularly dismayed about the SPL's assertion that local authorities hostile to central government were not necessarily subversive. The SHC admonished the SPL, reminding the attending Partridge that definitions had been changed for just those reasons. If 'Loony Left local authorities' were political opponents of the government, then that was more than enough justification to target them for specific action.[49] In education, the SHC was unanimous that the surprise inspections should be continued and that, with the success of the civil service blacklist in mind, HM Inspectorate should be encouraged to produce lists of teachers thought to be under subversive influence.[50] The SHC members showed more sympathy to the SPL's difficulties with the health service. Nevertheless, they too appeared to favour a less cautious approach than what had previously been the norm. They instructed the SPL to put aside hesitation concerning risk and begin work on creating an NHS blacklist as soon as possible. If the SPL could not do it directly, then 'local managers [should] be encouraged to report the names of subversives, so that they [can] be checked by MI5' and a blacklist created in that way.[51]

Armstrong demonstrated that the chain of command had not been altered since the first report in 1985. The SHC Chair told the other permanent secretaries that they should not inform their own departmental minister about the SPL's report. Armstrong would send it directly to Thatcher and

[48] SHC Meeting Minutes, convened to discuss 2nd report of the SPL, 13th March 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[49] Ibid
[50] Ibid
[51] Ibid

Brittan's replacement as Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, with explicit instruction that 'no formal report [is to be] put to ministers.'[52] It could be argued that the SHC, in their response to the second SPL report, were simply saying what they believed the Prime Minister wanted to hear. Operating in the culture of conformity, their criticisms echoed Thatcher's own after the Prime Minister had read the first report. Direct action to sack civil servants and schoolteachers was praised, while criticism was aimed at sectors where that had not been implemented.

Armstrong's more critical response to the second report can perhaps be regarded as a way of highlighting what might be expected from a SHC Chair – for the benefit of his prospective replacement. The old Thatcher-appointee was retiring from his post as Cabinet Secretary and was preparing for a move to the House of Lords where he would sit as a crossbencher – rewarded with a knighthood and lifetime peerage. The outgoing SHC Chair had served under different administrations in his career, including as Principal Secretary to Harold Wilson. Despite that, Armstrong's links to MI5 and the original SHC were decades in the making. By 1987, the Cabinet Secretary had spent over two years at the head of the SHC, overseeing the SPL group's work, instructing and directing them, and feeding their reports directly to Thatcher. Before his retirement, Armstrong would be deployed to Australia for one last, ill-fated attempt at keeping up the Thatcher loyalists' adherence to stealth. Armstrong had appeared sporadically throughout the pages of Peter Wright's *Spycatcher*, and in September 1987 was called as a witness by the British government in a failed attempt to supress the book's publication in Australia. However, his evidence was ridiculed in the press for its obviously deceptive nature.[53] Wright's lawyer and future Prime Minister of Australia Malcolm Turnbull said of Armstrong 'if he is an honest man, then he appears rather like a well-educated mushroom.'[54] The Cabinet Secretary and SHC Chair seemed to put Tory concerns above all others. Several ministers had turned down requests to fly to Australia before Armstrong agreed to do so. [55] 'Someone had to do the job,' the Cabinet Secretary later reflected on his humiliating task.[56] In March 2019, it was alleged by *the Guardian* that in 1986 Armstrong went as far as supressing evidence that Tory MP Peter Morrison was a child molester with, according to MI5, 'a penchant for small boys.'[57] Although that particular allegation was not proven, Armstrong's *Spycatcher* humiliation might be seen as

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[52] Ibid
[53] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p181.
[54] Untitled, 'Robert Armstrong: Baron Armstrong of Ilminster,' *News Directory Online*, https://dir.md/wiki/Robert_Armstrong,_Baron_Armstrong_of_Ilminster?host.org (Accessed 14th March 2019).
[55] Peter Oborne. *The Triumph of the Political Class* (London: Pocket Books 2007), p117.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Owen Bowcott, 'MI5 did not tell police of minister's 'penchant for small boys', inquiry hears, *the Guardian* 11th March 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/mar/11/mi5-did-not-tell-police-of-former-mps-penchant-for-small-boys-inquiry-hears

further evidence, alongside his work with the SPL, of a man whose loyalty was to the sitting government and the Prime Minister who had appointed him ten years earlier. Armstrong had been an important figure in the development of the culture of conformity. After the outgoing Cabinet Secretary flew home from Australia the SDP Leader, David Owen, remarked that Armstrong had 'become a civil servant who's very much seen as a supporter of the government.'[58] The position of Cabinet Secretary had been meant to guard the distinction between party and state.[59] Instead, Armstrong's tenure was defined, as the journalist Peter Oborne put it, by the spectacle of a man 'pressured into carrying out political favours for the Prime Minister of the day.'[60]

Armstrong was not the only one stepping down. Michael Partridge would also be replaced as Chair of the SPL. Another example of one of Thatcher's public-sector loyalists, the outgoing SPL Chair had shown his commitment to the Prime Minister initially through his work with the Leicester Unit. His attempts to compile the 'dossier of evidence' had not been successful, but they had earmarked him as the perfect candidate for the SPL Chair. Between January 1985 and March 1987, Partridge had overseen a state-sponsored counter-subversion exercise which had targeted political opponents of the government in four different areas of the public sector. He was rewarded with his own knighthood, in 1990.[61] Partridge's replacement as Chair of the SPL was Armstrong's former Principal Private Secretary, John Chilcot (Appendix D for full changes in personnel).

Armstrong's own replacement as Cabinet Secretary was Robin Butler, the former Private Secretary to the Prime Minister who had fed back Thatcher's 'disappointment' regarding the Leicester Unit's failure to jail Scargill, to the Home Office in October 1984.[62] Butler had existing relationships with several senior Tories. He was known to be a regular attender at Jeffrey Archer's 'champagne and Shepherd's Pie parties.'[63] Butler had worked under private-sector loyalist Victor Rothschild in the Centre Policy Review Staff since 1972.[64] The senior civil servant was also an acquaintance of Tory MP Jonathan Aitken.[65] Butler would later face his own '*Spycatcher* moment.' Toward the end of his stint as Cabinet Secretary in 1995, he was called on to carry out an investigation into Aitken after a media story asserted that the Tory MP had stayed at the London Ritz at a foreign businessman's expense and then lied about it. When that was later proved to be true,

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[58] Hennessey, *Whitehall*, p673.
[59] Oborne, *Triumph of the Political Class*, p114.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Untitled, Honours List for 1990, *London Gazette*, 16th June 1990, https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/52173/page/3/data.pdf (Accessed 1st March 2019).
[62] Principal Private Secretary to Thatcher Robin Butler to Secretary of the Home Office Hugh Taylor, 16th October 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.
[63] Oborne, *Triumph of the Political Class*, p118.
[64] Hennessey, *Whitehall*, p224.
[65] Oborne, *Triumph of the Political Class*, p118.

Butler's prior investigation was revealed to be half-hearted at best. As Oborne put it, 'there was not a great deal of evidence that he guarded the boundaries between party and state with the diligence that might have been expected.'[66] Both Aitken and Archer were later jailed for perjury. In 1987, Butler might well have seemed like a good fit for both the role of Cabinet Secretary and also of SHC Chair – the living embodiment of the disintegration of state / party distinction during the period and someone who would easily pass the 'one-of-us' question.[67] In a BBC documentary in 2019, Butler described the senior civil service in 1987 as being akin to Thatcher's 'family' whose loyalty was to the Prime Minister above all else.[68] Those outside of the 'fully-Thatcherised Satrapy' were to be regarded as rivals – even non-Thatcherite Tory ministers.[69] The SPL group had outlived Armstrong and Partridge. Their replacements were tasked with carrying on with the group's activities in education and the civil service, as well as spreading those activities into those two outstanding areas identified by their predecessors as being under subversive influence - local government and the NHS.

[66] Ibid.
[67] Changes Confirmed April 1987, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[68] 'Margaret Thatcher: A Very British Revolution: Part4: That Bloody Woman.' Dir & Prod. Alice Perman. *BBC i-Player*, 10th June 2019. Viewed 10th June 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005wyb/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-4-that-bloody-woman
[69] Ibid.

Chapter 13: 'The Position Becomes Less Clear Cut': The NHS, Local Government and the end of the Culture of Conformity

The SPL's second report in February 1987 had indicated that some within the Thatcherite state had become less fearful of public exposure as the Tories consolidated power. Four months after the second report, in June, Margaret Thatcher and the Tories won a second landslide General Election and secured a third term in office. Of the 30 million people who voted, the vast majority (over 17 million) did not vote for the Tories. However, the SDP/Liberal Alliance and the now Centrist-led Labour Party split the anti-Tory vote (7m and 10m respectively), meaning that the tried and tested Tory electoral alliance held firm, with 13 million votes and a loss of only 20 seats since the 1983 landslide. The Tory coalition of affluent South East voters and big voting blocks in the Midlands and South West was enough for another large victory.[1] The second landslide increased the consolidation of power by Thatcher's loyalists yet further. Redwood's successor as Policy Director of the DSPU was private-sector loyalist, ex-banker and Dean of the London School of Economics Business School, Brian Griffiths.

With the upper-levels of the civil service 'Thatcherised,' Griffiths was able to recruit promising Whitehall loyalists directly into the DSPU to take their place alongside their private-sector counterparts. David Hobson, hand-picked by Thatcher for his Whitehall role, switched to the DSPU shortly after the election.[2] A Cabinet reshuffle removed the last non-Thatcher ministers.[3] The second landslide gave the Thatcherites the confidence to confront the education sector head on – abandoning all premise of stealth and overtly centralising power. The Education Reform Bill of 1988, brought in by Keith Joseph's successor Kenneth Baker, placed the entire school curriculum within the ambit of central government. From now on, 90 percent of the school-day would be ordained by Thatcher's loyalists in Whitehall.[4] Cabinet members spent hours rewriting mathematics papers and wrangled over whether a History advisor was ideologically sound.[5] Thatcher involved herself in the debate, specifically demanding a re-write of the history curriculum to reflect 'the truth.'[6] The *Modern Law Review* called the bill 'the high point of elective dictatorship'.[7] Universities, a pet-hate of the Prime Minister, were also punished. As well as further cuts, Thatcher would publicly lampoon

[1] Alwyn Turner. *Rejoice! Rejoice! Britain in the 1980s* (London: Aurum Press 2013), p259.
[2] Brian Griffiths Head of DSPU to Thatcher, 1st November 1986. *TNA* PREM/2076.1.
[3] 'Margaret Thatcher: A Very British Revolution: Part4: That Bloody Woman.' Dir & Prod. Alice Perman. *BBC i-Player*, 10th June 2019. Viewed 10th June 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0005wyb/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-4-that-bloody-woman
[4] Simon Jenkins. *Thatcher and Sons: A Revolution in Three Acts* (London: Allen Lane 2007), p117.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p306.
[7] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p117.

the sector. In early 1989 she famously quipped that 'I went to Oxford University, but I've never let it hold me back.'[8] With new faces at the helm of both the SPL and the overseeing SHC, the Thatcher loyalists' increased confidence was manifested in the decision to overcome fears of publicity and to target sections of local government – and the National Health Service.

If Nicholas Ridley was not aware of the existence of the SPL, he seemed to have the same targets in mind. The Environment Minister had railed against the education sector in 1987, at the same time that the SPL was focusing on that area. In early 1988, he denounced local government which, he said, had an 'almost incestuous relationship with its council tenants.'[9] Ridley told the Prime Minister that he was determined to weaken that bond.[10] . The Environment Minister attacked Labour-controlled local authorities, which he accused of keeping council house rents 'absurdly low' in order to buy political allegiance from the inhabitants.[11] Ridley also accused local councillors of giving 'grants to lesbian and gay groups' in return for voting loyalty.[12] Ridley was not the only one of Thatcher's loyalists pressing that same message. Thatcher's friend and private-sector loyalist, Woodrow Wyatt, who had called for the prosecution of Scargill during the Leicester Unit affair, told the Prime Minister, shortly after the 1987 election triumph, that 'local government…is undemocratic and should be run by Whitehall with a fixed budget.'[13] Tory MP Cecil Franks had lost his seat on Manchester council. During a 1987 Commons debate on local government, Franks revealed what was, for him, the problem with Labour-leaning councils in the north. 'Those who are the dross of our society, who contributed nothing but took everything out of society had a vote, whereas those putting something in did not.'[14] Here again was the old Tory dissatisfaction with local government – and particularly the rates system.

Ridley, still in the role of Environment Secretary, also pushed for NHS privatisation, though he later admitted to Thatcher critic Ian Gilmour that Thatcher thought it 'too sensitive a topic to expose to the electorate.'[15] However, the Prime Minister was on the record as saying that she herself used a private healthcare provider and was typically bombastic about the issue. 'I exercise my right as a free citizen,' thundered the Prime Minister, 'to spend my own money my own way.'[16] During the eighties, the number of British people with private healthcare doubled – though that still

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[8] Ibid, p121.
[9] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism (London: Simon & Schuster 1992),* p145.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Nicholas Ridley. *My Style of Government: The Thatcher Years* (London: Hutchinson 1991), p80.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Andy McSmith. *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s (London: Constable 2011),* p276.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Gilmour, *Dancing With Dogma*, p155.
[16] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p226.

accounted for only 10% of the population.[17] The figures for private education were roughly the same.[18] Thatcher could point to her right-to-buy scheme as an example of a privatisation which was extremely popular with some sections of the working-class. However, publicly-owned healthcare and schools were different. For the vast majority of the British population, the state system in health and education was not a safety net, but a fundamental part of life. Despite that, the continuing wave of privatisation had not left healthcare untouched. Charges for eye tests and dental care were introduced in 1988 for the first time.[19]

Ridley, the old orchestrator of the stealth approach, had more advice for the Prime Minister aside from local government and the health service. The Thatcher confidante also railed against dole payments, which he claimed were too high – leading to the emergence of a feckless dependency culture. Ridley gave an anecdote about his own window cleaner, who, the minister claimed, had told Ridley he was retiring onto the dole, as it was better pay. Perturbed, Ridley revealed that 'for a long time, my windows went dirty.'[20] The decade had seen a massive spike in homelessness in Britain.[21] Visiting London in mid-1988, Mother Teresa was said to be shocked at the seemingly-endless victims of nearly ten years of Thatcherism – a sight she had never seen before in a first-world country. 'I didn't know what to say,' she remarked, 'there were tears in my eyes.'[22] Ridley had a different perspective to Mother Teresa. Dismissing homelessness out-of-hand, he claimed that evidence that many on the dole were near starvation was 'false,' 'homelessness was a misnomer,' and a report he had read by a fellow Tory minister had revealed that there was no such thing as poverty.[23] The language used by senior Tories in 1988 seemed to denote a lack of guardedness as another electoral landslide led them to abandon caution in public pronouncements. MP George Young's contribution to the homeless debate was to dismiss homeless people in a Radio interview as – 'the sort of people you step on when you come out of the opera.'[24] Chancellor Nigel Lawson's budget in March 1988 was an ideological sledgehammer. With the miners' strike now a thing of the past and the trade

[17] Ibid, p227.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid, p265.
[20] Ridley, *My Style*, p99.
[21] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p270.
[22] Graham Heathcote, 'Mother Teresa Weeps For London's Homeless,' *Associated Press Archive* 14th April 1988, https://www.apnews.com/b6e516a7ab7a52850431dae4443f97fe (Accessed 2nd August 2019).
[23] Ridley, My Style, p83 & p90.
[24] The original radio programme is not available. Multiple sources attribute this quote to Young including Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p270 and George Eaton. 'Sir George Young appointed new Chief Whip,' *New Statesman*, 19th October 2012, https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2012/10/sir-george-young-appointed-new-chief-whip

union movement critically injured, Lawson slashed the top rate of income tax from 60% to 40%. Britain's wealthy elite would now pay less tax than at any time since before the First World War.[25]

Local government was also a target for centralisation projects. In 1987 the Urban Development Corporations, which had been used to undermine local Labour councils in Liverpool and London, were expanded to several other Labour strongholds including Manchester, Cardiff, Newcastle and Leeds.[26] Like with Liverpool and London, the UDC's were given grants not available to the local authority – undermining local councils and leaving them unable to fund themselves. Newcastle Council leader Jeremy Beecham complained that his council did 'not even have enough money to paint the bridges over the Tyne.'[27] Thatcher gave personal orders that the London UDC would get preferential treatment over the northern regions.[28] From now on local authorities would not even run their own police, fire and transport. Despite self-professed claims of libertarian anti-statism, Thatcher and her loyalists had centralised local government power, thus undermining political opponents in the north and abandoning the stealth-approach favoured in many of Thatcher's political battles before the 1987 landslide. With the confidence of winning three elections and two landslides, Thatcher even began to take Ridley seriously about the NHS. In December 1987, the Prime Minister complained to colleagues that the health service was a 'bottomless financial pit.'[29] Later that month, she told the BBC's Panorama programme that the NHS should be 'totally reformed.'[30] In early 1988, Ridley began to publicly talk-up plans to bring in some mild forms of private provision.[31]

Despite both the overt attacks of centralisation and the covert counter-subversion of the SPL, the areas targeted by Thatcher's loyalists continued to be a thorn in the side of the Prime Minister. Given the 1,420 civil servants on the original blacklist and the unknown number of schoolteachers targeted for surprise inspection, the targeting procedures of the SPL might well have seemed painfully slow. The SPL had admitted that the overall 'subversive scene' was unchanged in the civil service, while schoolteachers had hardly converted to Thatcherism en-masse. This might be taken to show that both the civil service and the education sector appeared remarkably resilient to both overt and covert attack. Local authorities across the north had remained deeply hostile. In the

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[25] Richard Vinen. *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the 1980s* (London: Simon & Schuster 2009).
p206.
[26] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p130.
[27] Ibid
[28] Ibid.
[29] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p113.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ridley, *My Style*, p96.

NHS, nurses had gone on strike on 3rd February 1988 for higher pay and more funding for the health service. An even larger nurses' strike took place on the 16th February. Ridley's plans for partial privatisation had met fierce resistance and had been met with, in his own words, 'storms of protest' from GPs and hospitals nationwide.[32] Ridley dismissed the nurses and doctors, who he claimed used 'fashionable words such as underfunded and under-resourced.'[33] However, the Environment Minister was finding out that the overt targeting of specific sectors required political legitimisation and the winning of arguments - none of which had been necessary in his stealth approach.

Chilcot wrote to Butler in July 1988 to confirm that the SPL had continued its counter-subversion activities in the interim, regardless of the change in personnel. Chilcot offered a reason for the long period in-between the second report and the forthcoming one – an 18-month gap. One of the civil service trade unions, the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) had run internal elections in May. According to Chilcot, the SPL had information that one of the groups vying for power within the union, the 'Broad Left Group,' was a front for Militant Tendency, and was widely predicted to lose. Chilcot has waited until Militant had taken the hit from that election defeat.[34] The new SPL Chair reported the 'total defeat' of Militant in that election, and confirmed that no new subversive threats were evident within the civil service.[35] Chilcot also announced that the threat in education was 'stabilising.'[36] With that being the case, Chilcot told Butler that the SPL had done as instructed and spent more time in the interim focusing on the other two areas – local government and the health service. NHS counter-subversion had taken place 'despite its acute sensitivity and the high risk of embarrassment in the event of any leak.'[37] Fear of exposure had not been totally overcome. By 1988, however, Thatcherism was entrenched in the mind-set of both the Thatcher-appointees in Whitehall, and also the majority of the Cabinet.[38]

The selective dipstick technique used in education had been applied in local government. With help from MI5 and Ridley's Department of Environment, the SPL had identified twelve authorities likely to be under some sort of 'subversive' influence. The SPL had focused exclusively on safe Labour constituencies, under the premise that 'subversion…would only be found in councils under Labour control.'[39] Ten of the councils were in East London, including Camden and Lambeth.[40]

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid, p97.
[34] New SPL Chair John Chilcot to new SHC Chair and Cabinet Secretary Robin Butler, 11th July 1988, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p135.
[39] Third Report of the SPL, 9th August 1988, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486, p1. All subsequent references as SPL3.

The other two were the northern Labour strongholds of Manchester and St Helens.[41] Exact numbers of subversives and sympathisers were reported in each location. The report conceded that 'there are no local councils which are under significant subversive influence.'[42] Armstrong had circumnavigated that previously by substituting the word 'subversive' with 'troublemaker.' Chilcot adopted the same technique. Councillors known for being campaigners for legitimate causes, such as anti-racism, had been targeted by the SPL - particularly ones who were themselves from an ethnic minority. 'On some councils,' warned the report, 'Asian or other ethnic councillors have been seen to seek, and indeed welcome, the support for their ethnic causes of subversives, especially Trotskyists.'[43] Once the link was made, however tenuously, the 'ethnic councillors' had become targets for blacklisting. As Chilcot put it, '[n]on-subversive trouble-makers have been the prime instigators of [the] disruption in local councils, but subversives will always be ready exploit disruption, however caused.'[44] Being a 'non-subversive troublemaker' made you susceptible to subversive influence – the same 'guilty by association' justification used by Stella Rimington and Roy Harrington previously. Both of those SPL members had survived the changes in personnel. A small local blacklist was compiled for each of the chosen areas. The names and affiliations of 'troublemakers' were passed to the overseeing SHC.

Of the four areas targeted by the SPL since its reformation in 1985, the National Health Service had received the least coverage. Paradoxically in an ideological context of sweeping privatisation, Britain's Health service, fully nationalised by the Labour government after the war, remained almost universally popular with the British public. Chancellor Nigel Lawson had warned against any attempt at privatisation, summing up the public's relationship with the NHS thus; 'The National Health Service is the closest thing the English have to a religion, with those who practice in it regarding themselves as a priesthood.'[45] Nevertheless, the report revealed that 'despite the risks, MI5 have looked at two health unions, the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE).'[46] MI5 had concentrated their efforts on the governing national committees of each union. The SPL had been able to compile a blacklist of sorts – though restricted to the union leadership and therefore much smaller and less detailed than the civil service one. Names and affiliations of 'subversives and sympathisers' were recorded.[47] Those on the

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[40] SPL3, p1.
[41] SPL3, p1.
[42] SPL3, p2.
[43] SPL3, p2.
[44] SPL3, p3.
[45] Nigel Lawson. *The View From Number 11* (London: Bantam Press 1993), p613.
[46] SPL3, p6.
[47] SPL3, p6.

list were identified as being a member or sympathiser of organisations such as Militant Tendency or the Communist Party.[48] The SPL had been monitoring the nurses' strikes, which had taken place earlier in the year. The group had concentrated its efforts on linking the strikes with subversion. Instead, a familiar picture emerged as in the other sectors. It was conceded that 'no evidence [exists] linking subversives to [the] current unrest in the Health Service.'[49] Regardless, MI5 had continued to monitor and blacklist. The Security Service had reported to the SPL that 'their coverage at national level [was adequate] to assess exploitation by subversive organisations.'[50] The report continued to highlight the 'unacceptably high risks' involved in targeting sections of the NHS for secret state blacklisting.[51] Therefore, the SPL did not take a direct course of action such as the civil service purge or unannounced inspections in education. As with the other sectors targeted, however, counter-subversion activity had taken place – identification and blacklisting of targets, despite an admission that strike activity was not believed to be subversive.

In education, the third report warned of a new group, the Socialist Teachers Alliance, which was said to have strong influence in London.[52] The report also described some of the effects of the implementation of the 'opting-out' initiative Ridley had designed. That change in policy, reflected the report, shifted management responsibility away from the local authorities and onto the governing boards of schools and colleges. The report argued that 'this will make it harder for subversives to influence things.'[53] HM Inspectorate remained ready, and had been ordered to report any 'significant disruption or abnormal activity' within the new bodies directly to the SPL.[54]As with the health service, MI5 would 'continue to monitor the situation.'[55] The SPL had also kept up its blacklisting within the civil service and reported that amongst the Trotskyites, there remained a 'general awareness' of the potential for exploitation by low morale and low pay.[56] The overall picture in the civil service was described as one of a small but continuing decline of subversives and sympathisers since 1985.[57]

By August 1988, blacklisting had taken place in at least some parts of all four of the sectors originally identified in 1985 toward the end of the miners' strike. In September, the permanent secretaries of the SHC met to give their verdict on the third report. The SHC members seemed much

[48] SPL3, p6.
[49] SPL3, p6.
[50] SPL3, p7.
[51] SPL3, p6.
[52] SPL3, p4.
[53] SPL3, p4.
[54] SPL3, p4.
[55] SPL3, p4.
[56] SPL3, p5.
[57] SPL3, p5.

more pleased than at the last overseers meeting. Butler announced that in local government, counter-subversion meant that 'fears [were now] reduced,' particularly in Liverpool and East London.[58] In education, fears remained, but MI5 had improved and were on top of things.[59] In the civil service, changes to recruitment were already taking place, with incoming graduates now 'checked' before any offer of employment was made.[60] In light of the move toward more overt targeting, and buoyed on by the achievement of successful counter-subversion in all four sectors, one of the permanent secretaries questioned whether the SPL should continue its high-risk work at all, or be disbanded. Most agreed with Butler that the 'inter-departmental arrangements for the close monitoring of particularly sensitive fields should continue.'[61] It was agreed that the SPL would produce its next report in two years' time.

Before the SPL's fourth report was issued, however, Margaret Thatcher was swept from power. That may have posed the SPL with a logistical problem of its own – given that the group bypassed ministers and reported directly to her via the SHC. What would have proved anathema to the SPL was that two of the areas targeted in the third report - local government and the National Health Service – were in part, responsible for bringing her down. Thatcher's dalliance with bringing in some privatisation to the NHS was met with strong resistance nationwide. A January 1989 White Paper had outlined Tory plans to 'simulate privatisation without actually doing it.'[62] Lawson's adage about the British religion had been ignored. Ridley, who favoured privatisation, had cautioned for a return to the stealth approach – in light of his own tarnished reputation in the health service. He warned that doctors were well-respected in communities, and that making enemies out of them was, as he had discovered, foolish.[63] Ridley was correct. The paper was received with outrage by the nation's general practitioners, and others within the health service. Doctors, hospital staff and the Labour Party combined to publicly denounce it.[64] The NHS paper had also announced the formation of 500 'trust hospitals' nationwide. That was an attempt at the centralisation carried out in the education sector and local government. However, direct centralisation of authority meant direct centralisation for the blame if anything went wrong – in a critically underfunded sector. As Jenkins argued, 'the Prime Minister became the de facto chief executive of every hospital in the land.'[65] Public dissatisfaction and distrust in regard to the health service was a mill-stone that would haunt

[58] Minutes of SHC Meeting to discuss third report of the SPL, 28th September 1988, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p114.
[63] Ridley, *My Style*, p97.
[64] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, 114.
[65] Ibid, p115.

Tory administrations into the 21st Century. Thatcher's downfall can mostly be attributed, however, to her continuing obsession with, and hostility toward, local government. In both cases, overconfidence gained from the second landslide lead Thatcher and her loyalists to abandon adherence to stealth.

Local government authorities, particularly Labour-controlled councils in the north, had continued to offer resistance to the Thatcher revolution. Those regional councils might well have seemed to Thatcher to contain by far the largest collection of 'subversives' out of all of the targeted areas. The rate-capping rebellion had been defeated in late 1985. However, Tory policies such as rate-capping, allowing schools to 'opt-out' and the Urban Development Corporations had acted to undermine local authorities and had exasperated already hostile local councillors. As with the miners, the Prime Minister appeared to want total victory. The SPL's specific targeting, such as the civil service purge procedure or the surprise inspections in education, had not been applied in local government – though blacklisting had been carried-out in the 12 targeted areas. As with education and health, Thatcher wanted a plan to centralise and diminish the power of her perceived enemies – but also rally her supporters. Thatcher turned back to the argument surrounding 'the rates.' The system was hated by many middle-class Tory voters and seen as unfair. In Camden, one of the areas secretly targeted by the SPL, inhabitants of affluent areas such as Hampstead felt like they were obliged to subsidise inhabitants of the council estates which made up the poorer parts of the borough, all the while knowing that they would always be outvoted by those on the estates - many of whom were exempt from the rates.[66] Thatcher had ordered reviews to be carried out shortly after her election victories in both 1979 and 1983.[67] Patrick Jenkin, the Environment Minister in 1983, concluded that the rates were an adequate system that were 'well understood, cheap to collect and very difficult to evade.'[68] Operating in the same culture of conformity as everyone else, however, the minister was 'desperate to appease his boss's presumed radicalism.'[69] He ordered a further review for the autumn. Thatcher insisted that one of her private-sector loyalists be included in the review group.

The now-elderly Victor Rothschild had been an official Tory advisor since Heath had made him Chief of the Policy Review Staff in 1972. He had been one of the private-sector loyalists invited to the Chequers meeting in 1979, called to discuss subversion. Rothschild was still chief executive of NM Rothschild, the company which was a longstanding Economic League donator and had seconded

[66] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p350.
[67] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p140.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

Redwood into the DSPU during the miners' strike. He was also an ex-vice-chairman of Shell, another League donator which had seconded Wybrew to the DSPU. With such an impressive itinerary, Rothschild was given the task of coming up with a new idea regarding the rates. Previously, the rates had set bills in accordance with household income. Rothschild came up with the idea of replacing that system with a 'community charge.'[70] Instead of sending bills of different size, one to each householder, the local authority would have to bill everyone on the register for a flat rate for local services – levied on rich and poor alike and regardless of income.[71] The 1987 Tory Party Conference had seen a passionate defence of this idea by Gerry Malone, who had lost his Aberdeen seat – an outcome which he blamed on the oil-rich town's high rates for wealthy constituents.[72] According to Ridley, Thatcher whispered in his ear that 'we shall have to look at this again, Nick.'[73] The Local Government Finance Act of 1988 brought the Community Charge into operation. First to be trialled in Scotland, the Charge would be rolled out across Britain by 1990. However, surveys carried out by the government indicated that only the top-earning 20% would be better off under the new system – while the remaining 80% would be significantly worse off.[74] Crucially, this meant that so-called 'Essex Man,' the lower middle-classes and better-off working-class people - who had benefitted from right-to-buy and who formed a vital part of the Tories voting bloc - would lose out. [75]

Senior Tory ministers claimed in hindsight to have known that the Community Charge was a political disaster waiting to happen.[76] However, even senior ministers were operating in the culture of conformity. Political opponents within the Tory Party such as Michael Heseltine were dismissed as 'socialists' for questioning Thatcher.[77] When, later, Thatcher heard that Heseltine had announced a leadership bid, she privately told colleagues that he was 'on the side of Saddam,' a reference to the ongoing Gulf War and an example of the Prime Minister's black and white perceptions concerning most issues.[78] On the eve of the Community Charge's implementation, Chancellor Nigel Lawson, seen as one of the few ministers willing to stand up to Thatcher, resigned. Lawson had demanded the removal of Thatcher's long-time ally and private-sector loyalist, Alan Walters, a demand which had been refused by the Prime Minister.[79] Once at a safe distance himself, Lawson lambasted other ministers such as Chris Patten, who Lawson accused of allowing a terrible bill to go through, so

[70] McSmith, *No Such Thing as Society*, p277.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Jenkins, Thatcher and Sons, p141.
[75] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p285.
[76] See Ridley, *My Style*, p219-202. And Lawson, *View From Number 11*, p1001.
[77] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p145.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid, p139.

fearful was Patten of appearing to question Thatcher's will.[80] A series of examinations and debates about the bill took place before implementation. In one of the most telling examples of how completely the culture of conformity had closed down debate and dissent within the Tory Party and Whitehall, those involved in the examinations failed in what should have been their only purpose – to abandon the scheme.[81] By 1989, the Fully-Thatcherised Satrapy in Whitehall had abandoned the last vestige of political neutrality and was now completely out of control, according to the Prime Minister's own Private Secretary, Caroline Slocock.[82] Lawson reflected that by 1989, any discussion or questioning of Thatcher's will was forbidden by her and her echo chamber within the culture of conformity.[83]

Among the general public, the name 'Community Charge' never caught on. Instead, the universally reviled scheme was known as the 'Poll Tax.' In Scotland, where the Poll Tax was first introduced, 26,000 people ceased to exist in Glasgow – their names disappearing off voting registers because people had no way of paying the high amounts.[84] In poorer areas, most people could not pay it – regardless of whether they wanted to or not. Militant Tendency, repeatedly the target of SPL counter-subversion, was responsible for setting up the Anti-Poll Tax Federation in Scotland, where the 'subversives' persuaded over one million Scots not to register – from a population of just 3.8 million.[85] Implementation across England brought street protests across the north and a full-blown riot in London in March 1990.[86] In the polls, Labour's lead shot up to 20%.[87] The Mid-Staffordshire By-Election, ten days before the Poll Tax's introduction in England and Wales, saw a huge Tory majority overturned by Labour – a 20% swing and the biggest swing from Tory to Labour since the war.[88]

For Thatcher personally, the Poll Tax had seen the Prime Minister's aura of seeming invincibility, and the surrounding culture of conformity, destroyed. Just months earlier, at the 1989 Tory Conference, the chant had been for 'ten more years.'[89] Seemingly adopting the uncharacteristic lack of guardedness shared by her loyalists after the 1987 election, the Prime Minister had told her

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[80] Ibid, p143.
[81] Ibid, p142.
[82] 'Margaret Thatcher: A Very British Revolution: Part5: Downfall.' Dir. Pamela Gordon. Prod. Steve Condie. *BBC i-Player*, 17th June 2019. Viewed 10th June 2019. https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m00062r1/thatcher-a-very-british-revolution-series-1-5-downfall
[83] Ibid.
[84] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p283.
[85] Ibid, 284.
[86] Jenkins, *Thatcher and Sons*, p143.
[87] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p354.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p347.

friend Woodrow Wyatt that she fully intended to seek a fourth and even a fifth term in office.[90] Instead Tory ministers, tired of her bullying behaviour, turned on her one-by-one. Even her most staunch loyalists seemed to sense that the ship was sinking. Nicholas Ridley distanced himself from the Poll Tax, though some have argued that he was one of the chief architects of it.[91] Though he accused dissenting Tories of an 'ambush,' Ridley admitted that 'the blame lay at the Prime Minister's door.'[92] In his memoirs, Ridley put his own bad press over the Poll Tax down to jealousy 'because I went to Eton and Balliol.'[93] Again from his safe distance, Nigel Lawson referred to the Poll Tax as 'the greatest single political blunder of the Thatcher years.'[94] The centrist Labour leadership was less than effective, despite the Tories' massive mistake. Neil Kinnock labelled those who had vowed not to pay the Poll Tax as 'toytown revolutionaries who pretend that the tax can be stopped and the government toppled by non-payment.'[95] However, figures on the Labour left joined in the protests with Tony Benn, George Galloway and Jeremy Corbyn all signing-up for the non-payment campaign.[96] Beleaguered by opponents from across the political spectrum, (other than the centrist Labour leadership), facing another leadership challenge from Heseltine that she was predicted to lose, and enduring further high-profile resignations, Thatcher announced her own resignation in November 1990. Referring to the overconfidence and lack of stealth displayed by Thatcher and her loyalists from 1988 onwards, the journalist and commentator Mark Steel reflected that 'Thatcher, her [civil servants], her press and her police were like a boxer who'd become so used to winning that he doesn't notice the hunger and speed of his next opponent, or the flab accumulating on his own stomach.'[97]

Among the last pieces of evidence known to exist in regard to the SPL, is a correspondence concerning dockers' and transport workers' strikes which were both taking place in June 1989. MI5 had supplied Butler with names and other details of supposed subversives and sympathisers at National Executive Committee level within each union. The SPL conceded that both disputes appeared to be about pay and conditions. In a letter to the Prime Minister's Office, however, Butler argued that, although subversive organisations did not appear to be organising the dockers' strikes, 'this could mean that certain militant individuals [were] coordinating them,' therefore making the strikes subversive by association.[98] MI5, again drafted in to supply the required information, had

[90] Ibid.
[91] Bloom, *Thatcher's Secret War*, p284.
[92] Ridley, My Style, p227 & 221.
[93] Ibid, p222.
[94] Lawson, *The View From Number 11*, p1001.
[95] Turner, *Rejoice Rejoice*, p355.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Butler to Thatcher's Private Secretary Malcolm Turnbull, 12th June 1989, *TNA Kew*, CAN301/486.

shown concern that 'if it appears that [transport workers] support the strike as Trade Union members, they would not be an appropriate target for the Security Service.'[99] As ever, the usual justification was used; 'on the other hand, if they are still meeting to ensure the continuation of the strike at all costs in order to further subversive aims, then the position becomes less clear cut.'[100] Despite Thatcher's own move away from stealth, her public-sector loyalists inside the SPL were still actively, and covertly, pursuing 'subversives' as late as July 1989. Shortly after, Thatcher would take down with her the culture of conformity which had led to the abandonment of distinctions between party and state and the weaponisation of elements of the state against political opponents of the Prime Minister. Whether the SPL ever produced its fourth report for Prime Minister John Major, or even continued its activities beyond that, remains unknown. When the evidence detailing the existence and activities of the SPL was released in July 2018, those working within Britain's state apparatus again did so under the Conservative Party. *The Guardian* journalist Ian Cobain wrote to the Home Office to ask whether it was still involved in the blacklisting of civil servants. Despite originally refusing to acknowledge that the SPL had existed at all, the Home Office later changed the official line, hence: 'the inter-departmental group on Subversion in Public Life (SPL) is no longer in operation and there is no other unit conducting similar work.'[101] Whether the Home Office was telling the truth, or had merely returned to stealth adherence, will only become apparent at a later date.

Between 1985 and 1988 the SPL methodically weaponised sections of the state against civil servants, schoolteachers, local councillors and health workers. Blacklisting, a purge procedure, and surprise inspections were all deployed against political opponents of the Prime Minister and others who had been labelled as subversive. The methodology used to brand workers as subversives was crude and deeply unfair. As with both the DSPU and the Leicester Unit, the SPL eschewed political legitimacy by adhering to stealth, as originally set-out in the Ridley Report. Operating in the same culture of conformity in which the Leicester Unit had come into existence, Partridge, Rimington, Harrington, Hilary and the others carried-out partisan activities and secretly altered the lives of an unknown number of public sector workers. Along with the DSPU and the Leicester Unit, the SPL was another example of the lack of distinction between the governing Conservative Party and elements of the permanent state. The SPL operated with a direct line, through the SHC, to the Prime Minister who

[99] Patrick Walker MI5 and SPL, to Butler, 7th July 1989, *TNA Kew*, CAB301/486.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ian Cobain, 'Subversive civil servants secretly blacklisted under Thatcher,' *the Guardian* 24th July 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/24/subversive-civil-servants-secretly-blacklisted-under-thatcher (Accessed 16th January 2019).

gave them unambiguous orders to develop techniques to get people sacked and to spread their activities into other sectors.

Though it might be argued that senior civil servants such as Armstrong and Partridge were never likely to be politically neutral and could be expected to side against labour interests, that cannot account for the activities of the SPL.[102] Unlike with the other two groups highlighted in this research, many of those targeted between 1985 and 1989 were not on strike. Existing biases already present amongst those working within the state apparatus had been heightened by the prevailing atmosphere in which loyalty was not primarily to the British voters or the British state - but to Margaret Thatcher. In the case of the SPL, that partisanship and lack of neutrality was exacerbated because the group reported directly to the Prime Minister. The existence and activities of the SPL denote the continuing weaponisation of sections of the state – originally evident in the government's responses to the miners' strike and then continued within the culture of conformity well after the strike had ended. The miners' strike had allowed the 'gloves to come off,' and the normalisation of the disintegration between party and state. When the strike was finished, Thatcher's loyalists rolled-out the same weaponisation against workers in four other areas – in line with the Prime Minister's wishes.

Reflections on the Research Questions

If the existence and activities of the Leicester Unit demonstrated how far Thatcherism had permeated the permanent state, then the existence and activities of the SPL show the continuation of that politicisation after the miners' strike had ended. Cultural norms, including the weaponisation of sections of the state, not only continued but were broadened and rolled-out across four other areas of the public sector. However, Thatcher was again directly involved. That influence allowed SPL members to carry out their blacklisting and other activities secure in the knowledge that the Prime Minister had personally sanctioned the weaponisation of sections of the state against political opponents. Under the auspices of Thatcher and her DSPU loyalists, such activity had been normalised during the strike and manifested most obviously through the Leicester Unit. Once that normalisation had taken place, it was easy enough for those same agencies and same people to 'go after' other political opponents of the Prime Minister. The SPL served as another example of something different occurring under Thatcher – despite existing state biases. Direct interference by the Prime Minister, widespread blacklisting of state employees and even direct action intended to

[102] Ralph Miliband. *The State in Capitalist Society: The Analysis of the Western System of Power* (Aylesbury: Quartet Books 1974), p76

bring about dismissal are all extreme examples of the authoritarianism which defined the Thatcher tenure – despite public pronouncements of anti-statist ideological mores.

Chapter 14: Culture of Conformity Revisited

The recruitment of private-sector loyalists into the DSPU, the enlistment of ideologically-aligned civil-servants into Whitehall, direct pressure from the Prime Minister aimed at several state agencies to conform, and already-existing conservative biases within those agencies, all contributed to the development of a culture of conformity during Margaret Thatcher's tenure. That culture of conformity led to the partial disintegration of distinctions between the governing Conservative Party and elements of the permanent state. With those distinctions removed, some parts of the state apparatus were weaponised against political opponents of the sitting Prime Minister. The attempt to lean on the judiciary so that arrested miners were handed down exemplary sentences, efforts to compile a dossier of evidence against Arthur Scargill, and the blacklisting of public-sector employees in four other sectors were all examples of that weaponisation. In each case, a secretive and covert section of the state was responsible for the targeting of specified political opponents. Fearing the strength of the trade unions and lacking the political legitimacy to carry-out those activities in the open, Thatcher's loyalists did so in line with the Ridley Report's instruction to avoid a full-on confrontation and adhere to stealth.

The culture of conformity was established within sections of the state associated with longstanding conservative biases. The police had undergone a period of militarisation and politicisation during the 1970s and early 1980s. Some chief constables were politically aligned to Margaret Thatcher and made public announcements confirming that. MI5 had its own long history of conservatism, classism and hostility toward the NUM and the trade union movement in general. The civil service had taken part in the SHC and SPL in the 1970s. Private-sector loyalists had worked with Conservative governments for at least as long – via the Economic League. That existing state bias was an essential foundation on which the culture of conformity was built. However, the advent of Thatcher as Prime Minister was required to bring about the disintegration of party/state distinction on the levels described in these pages.

In an era of polarisation, the private-sector loyalists of the DSPU had been recruited precisely because they were partisan. Such men were never likely to be politically neutral – owing both their political allegiance and their recruitment to the Prime Minister herself. Even so, the DSPU's systematic attacks on the National Union of Mineworkers – starting with and including the accumulation of coal stocks in preparation for the strike – are an extreme example of the disintegration of distinctions between party and state and the weaponisation of the state by those partisans. The DSPU remained committed to the stealth approach as laid out in the Ridley Report. Policies such as avoiding the arrest of Scargill after Orgreave, the behind-the-scenes last-minute

NACODS agreement, attempts to influence the judiciary in order to bring about exemplary sentences, and enlisting the Foreign Office to go after the NUM's overseas assets, were all key examples of weaponising the state without the government having to admit publicly that it was involved in any of those covert activities. If the lack of political neutrality displayed by the private-sector loyalists of the DSPU was to be expected, proof of the ubiquitous nature of the culture of conformity is evident in how little resistance DSPU policy encountered and how ready senior officials, such as the Lord Chancellor and the Foreign Office Undersecretaries, were to go along.

Thatcher's recruitment of loyalists into Whitehall led to the politicisation of sections of the home civil service – the 'fully-Thatcherised satrapy.'[1] Moreover, the DSPU-aligned Scrutineers threatened job losses for any remaining non-conformists who might resist the culture of conformity. Thatcher directly instructed some of those within the state to pursue Scargill by supplying a 'dossier of evidence.' Rather than reacting to pre-existing evidence that any crime had been committed, the Home Office, MI5 and senior police all collaborated in an attempt to 'get Scargill,' because the sitting Prime Minister had told them to do so. Of those three agencies, only MI5 offered any resistance to the weaponisation of the state against the trade union leader. In the culture of conformity, however, that resistance was quickly overcome. During the multi-agency meetings that eventually led to the formation of the Leicester Unit, Michael Partridge voiced concerns that the Labour Party might find out about the multi-agency attempts to provide Thatcher's dossier of evidence and use that information 'against us.'[2] Partridge's language revealed a senior civil servant dedicated to carrying out Thatcher's will and operating in a climate where, to a large degree, party and state distinctions were absent.

Although Thatcher's culture of conformity was born out of the state's responses to the miners' strike, the defeat of the NUM allowed those working within it to switch the focus of their attention onto other political targets. Both the SPL and the overseeing SHC were originally set-up by Heath in 1972. However, their resurrection by Thatcher's loyalists in the wake of the miners' strike allowed for a plethora of new initiatives which revealed the continuing lack of distinction between party and state after the coal dispute had ended. Civil servants were covertly blacklisted, secretly barred from promotions, moved sideways away from sensitive positions and even sacked via a purge procedure under the direct instruction of the Prime Minister. Schoolteachers in the London area

[1] Hugo Young. 'The convictions which will not serve the full term,' *The Guardian Archive,* 21st July 1987, https://search-proquest-com.edgehill.idm.oclc.org/publicationissue/1D43B03C72CA4A2BPQ/$B/1/The+Guardian+$281959-2003$29$3b+London+$28UK$29/01987Y07Y21$23Jul+21,+1987/$N?accountid=10671 (Accessed 13th July 2019)

[2] Michael Partridge to Nigel Pantling, Private Secretary to Brittan, 1st August 1984, *TNA Kew*, HO325/624.

were singled out, blacklisted and then subjected to 'surprise' inspections in the hope that the SPL's intervention would lead to their dismissal. The involvement of HM Inspectorate revealed another agency of the state in which party and state distinctions appeared absent and which was weaponised against the unsuspecting teachers. Blacklisting had later taken place against local councillors in Manchester, St Helens and 10 London boroughs – all 12 areas chosen because they were safe Labour constituencies and thought to contain political opponents of the Prime Minister. Ethnic minority councillors had been targeted because of their tenuous links with those described as 'subversive' under the changed definition of that term. Finally, members of two NHS trade unions had been blacklisted despite deep concerns that the SPL's lack of political legitimacy might become all too apparent in the event of the public finding out.

The DSPU's partisanship behind the scenes was always accompanied by a public commitment to pretend that the upper-levels of the state were not involved. The Home Office loyalists such as Harrington and Hilary hid their own involvement in the creation of the Leicester Unit and distanced themselves publicly when its existence was revealed. The SPL's original reluctance to blacklist NHS employees was not based upon any moral or constitutional objection, but instead on the fear of public exposure. Thatcher critic Ian Gilmour's appraisal of some Tory ministers during the strike was to say that Thatcher's 'cleverest tactic was to make out that the government was scarcely involved in it.'[3] Covertly weaponising elements of the state against political opponents was a pursued policy of the Thatcher tenure, with the DSPU, the Leicester Unit and the SPL all serving as examples of that. It was overconfidence and the abandonment of stealth which eventually led to the end of the culture of conformity and Thatcher's downfall. The three groups all adhered to stealth as a deliberate policy of avoiding any form of public scrutiny. Covertly, all three used oppressive and arbitrary force – in doing so forsaking the legitimacy conferred to state institutions under the rule of law.[4] Lacking legitimacy, all three were exemplars of the Thatcherite state as an amoral state – having 'effective authority' but acting without moral authority.[5] Ralph Miliband argued that 'the state' in a Western democracy was never likely to be neutral – an unconscious bastion of ruling-class authoritarianism. What this research reveals, however, is a conscious politicisation of the state in order to weaponise agencies against political opponents. Existing conservative biases were not enough. Recruitment of both private-sector and Whitehall loyalists were purposeful moves to enhance the culture of conformity and aid the disintegration between the governing party and elements of the permanent state. The culture of conformity is different to what went before – a

[3] Ian Gilmour. *Dancing With Dogma: Britain Under Thatcherism* (London: Simon & Schuster 1992), p91.
[4] Bob Fine & Robert Millar (&eds.) 'Law of Market and Rule of Law,' in *Policing the Miners' Strike* (London: Laurence and Wishart 1985), p20.
[5] Immanuel Kant. 'Perpetual Peace,' in *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1999).*

conscious addition to an unconscious set of pre-existing biases and a deliberate and successful attempt to disintegrate party/state distinctions.

Arthur Scargill's claim in 1984 that the Tories meant to deploy a raft of pit closures 'by stealth' was correct. John Saville's 1985 paper highlighting the central importance of the Ridley Report is also proved to be accurate by the findings of this research.[6] Accusations that the government's responses to the strike were based more on political rather than economic factors are also enhanced. Both Redwood and Pascall of the DSPU said as much while the Prime Minister also talked about closing economically-sound pits to preserve the principal. The theatrical and polemical language of the private-sector loyalists of the DSPU is not in line with the calm and calculated language of indifferent state employees making a dispassionate appraisal of the mining industry. Rather, their language and activities reveal them for what they were – private-sector loyalists intent on fighting the miners on behalf of their leader. Moreover, the remit and the covert activities of the Leicester Unit would be difficult to link to any economic justification. The research adds to the literature on the miners' strike by casting serious doubt on longstanding Conservative claims that the government's objectives were entirely economic.

Reflecting on the Research Questions

1. **To what extent were the ideological mores of Thatcherism adopted by those working within the permanent state such as senior civil servants, MI5 officers and senior police?**
2. **What cultural norms were established within the state in response to Thatcher and Thatcherism?**

Civil servants used the theatrical language of the Thatcherites. MI5 officers and senior policemen also espoused Thatcherite rhetoric – often (in regard to the latter) to such a degree that they had to be warned to step back. Some of those within the state were quick to acquiesce to Thatcher's direct interference. Some of the language used, such as that in the SPL's report on London's schoolteachers, was in line with the ideological language of the government. Despite that, Thatcher's authoritarianism made it extremely difficult to defer due to the established culture of conformity. This research shows that ideological and political allegiance was one factor, but that it cannot alone account for the weaponisation of the state. Within the culture of conformity, activity which might previously have been seen as coercive was normalised. The striking miners were the catalyst for that change. Once the miners and their leaders had been recast as enemies of the state, then multi-agency initiatives to 'get Scargill' or interference in the law courts in regard to both

[6] John Saville. 'An Open Conspiracy: Conservative Politics and the Miners' Strike 1984-5,' *Socialist Register* 22 (August 1985), pp.295-329.

sentencing and finance, were justified. Once that initial justification had taken place, it was easier to recast rank-and-file civil servants, London schoolteachers, local Labour councillors and NHS trade-union members as enemies of the state – where previously they would have been political opponents of the governing party. Although occasional whistleblowers came forward, the weaponisation of the state was normalised within the culture of conformity. However, those operating within the culture of conformity knew that their activities lacked the legitimacy of public support. Adherence to stealth was also adopted as a cultural norm – allowing groups such as the Leicester Unit and the SPL to go after Thatcher's political opponents without any scrutiny as to whether their own activity could ever be legitimised.

3. **Margaret Thatcher has been described by Simon Jenkins as an aggressive and angry leader. In what way did Thatcher's leadership and personality influence members of the permanent state during her tenure?**
4. **Thatcher recruited private-sector loyalists directly into the state apparatus. What impact did they have on members of the permanent state?**

The most important factor in the establishment of the culture of conformity was Thatcher herself. Her authoritarian interference, her confrontational personality and the loyalty and fear she inspired were essential in bringing about the weaponisation of sections of the state. Thatcher replaced civil servants who could not pass the 'one-of-us' criteria with more ideologically-acceptable mandarins. The snubbing of the MI5 Director-General, and his eventual replacement with a SHC member, was another example of direct action taken to remake the state in her own image. Public pronouncements aimed at rank-and-file policemen and private instructions given to senior officers furthered Thatcher's influence throughout the permanent state. Margaret Thatcher inspired two distinct things – loyalty and fear. Each was a key factor in the establishment of the culture of conformity.

The private-sector loyalists were an essential part of the culture of conformity. Recruited precisely because they were loyal to the Prime Minister and her ideology, they were given higher status than existing civil servants. The DSPU was also behind the 'Scrutineers' initiative, meaning dissenters could be removed. The recruitment of private-sector loyalists could be viewed as an ideological move – reflecting neoliberal beliefs about the superiority of the private-sector. However, the DSPU and its activities were put in place mainly to aid Thatcher's deliberate disintegration of distinctions between party and state. By appointing her loyalists into the DSPU, Thatcher had created and empowered a group of men who had a higher status than most civil servants, had the

power to replace dissenters within the state, and who played a key role in establishing the culture of conformity.

5. **Clive Bloom and Seamus Milne have argued that the advent of Thatcher led to the politicisation of sections of the state. How far was this a new manifestation, given existing claims that the permanent state had always been politically biased in favour of conservatism?**
6. **Although neoliberal theory champions the rolling-back of the state, Thatcherism has been described by Stuart Hall as 'Authoritarian Populism.' To what extent is Hall's theory proven or disproven by the new evidence?**

Miliband's assertion, about the conservative biases evident within any state in Western society, is discussed elsewhere in this thesis. The research findings do back that claim up – to an extent. Existing and inherent biases were an important contributing factor to the manifestation of the culture of conformity. Political policing undertaken by Special Branch and far-right dogma publicly espoused by some chief constables confirm Cockcroft's analysis that elements of the British police had always been conservative. For senior civil servants, shared cultural and social-class ties made those within those organisations more likely to carry conservative biases. Christopher Andrew's history of MI5 reveals a deeply-conservative and class-conscious organisation with structural biases against organised labour. Despite all of that, the advent of Thatcher revealed a decisive move away from the norm. Exiting conservative biases were simply not enough. Pressure from above enhanced what, to some degree, was already there. Already-existing conservatism and state-bias were super-charged by the advent of an ideologically aligned Prime Minister. Moreover, Thatcher's direct interference behind the scenes.

'Thatcherism' might be said, on the evidence here, to be the most interventionist ideology ever implemented in modern British times – if not outright totalitarian then certainly a fine example of Hogg's 'elective dictatorship' – the term he used 10 years before the Lord Chancellor's own 'word to the wise' with his judiciary.[7] This was not just what Bloom called 'Thatcherism sans Thatcher,' although that also occurred during the strike – including the attitudes and behaviours of some elements of the police.[8] Rather, this was direct authoritarianism - deliberate and personal interference by Thatcher in order to bring about the weaponisation required to attack and defeat the miners and other elements of the organised working-class. Bagehot had warned of a British

[7] Quintin Hogg to Margaret Thatcher, 18th December 1984, *TNA Kew*, PREM19/1578.
[8] Clive Bloom. *Thatcher's Secret War: Subversion, Coercion, Secrecy and Government 1974-90* (Stroud: The History Press 2015), p95.

constitutional susceptibility to a 'zealot-like Premier.'[9] Thatcher and her loyalists within the three groups had proved him correct. This research reveals the acute levels of authoritarianism involved in implementing Thatcherism by showing that the ideology required the weaponisation of the state against political opponents to succeed – hardly the work of the (neo)liberal invisible hand. The findings compliment Phil Scraton's 1985 work which highlighted Thatcherism's ability to bring about a 'united mobilisation' of state forces, including the police and judiciary, against flying pickets and other alien groups.[10]

Barriers to the Research

As discussed in the introduction, in order to complete this research it was necessary to overcome several barriers which occurred when trying to obtain 'politically sensitive' material. It could be argued that the current system allows state agencies to 'pick and choose' which material to release and therefore requires a clarification of regulatory procedure. As discussed, the papers concerning the Leicester Unit were only released under pressure from the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign. Official methods – such as Freedom of Information Requests (FOI) – are easy to bypass for a government department inclined to keep a particular file hidden. Some state agencies can look with suspicion toward the historian who is requesting to look at files. For instance, South Yorkshire Police's (SYP) claim that my request to see that agency's files might be 'vexatious' in nature. There are two points to address here. Firstly, the best methods of finding out *what is available*. Secondly, finding out *how to access* that material. In the first instance, FOI requests can be very useful. State agencies are legally-bound to inform a requestor of what material they hold concerning a specific subject. In this author's reply from SYP, the force's Compliance Officer informed me that the agency had over 30 boxes of material relating to Orgreave. This can prove tantalising if a historian is then told that he cannot access that material (as indeed happened in this case), but FOI was essential in finding out exactly who had what. The National Archives website and search engine is another useful tool – in locating exactly what has been handed over. Though again, this does not necessarily mean that one will be allowed to view it.

Once a requestor has identified exactly what material is available, the second (and more difficult) problem is gaining access. It is necessary here to reflect on the barriers faced in gaining access to significant information. Although state agencies must reply to FOI requests and inform the requestor of the documentation held, a different criteria exists when deciding whether to let the

[9] Walter Bagehot. *The English Constitution* (London: Chapman and Hall 1949), p206.
[10] Phil Scraton & Phil Thomas. *The State v the People: Lessons from the Coal Dispute* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1985), p264.

historian actually view the files. A plethora of opaque 'exceptions' can be applied. The current state of affairs allows the British state to manufacture versions of the past which 'cut out' the worst excesses of state coercion. The continuing electoral successes of the Conservative Party mean that senior Tories act as gatekeepers to knowledge about the party's previous administrations.

Reflections on the Contribution to Knowledge

It might be argued that the evidence, analysis and conclusions of this research do not portray the actions of those within the culture of conformity in a flattering light. However, any attempt to revise the findings in order to avoid controversial conclusions would represent lazy conformism. With findings such as these, accurate portrayals of those involved, and true representations of the evidence, might be said to constitute risk-taking. If so, then being unafraid to take those risks adds further to an innovative thesis which highlights an original topic (the three groups), is evidenced by new data (the archives) and makes a significant contribution toward filling the knowledge gap concerning the government's responses to the strike.

This research makes a contribution to knowledge by building on the work of academics such as Stuart Hall and Ralph Miliband– particularly Hall's concept of authoritarian populism and Miliband's work on the function of the state. Hall and Scraton both defined Thatcherism and the Thatcherite state as definitively authoritarian, *in a different way to what had gone before*. However, those authors were less successful in integrating their findings with Miliband's theories. Miliband argued convincingly that the state in Western democracies *had always been* partisan, likely to be biased in favour of more conservative regimes and authoritarian by its own nature. If the British state was already authoritarian, then what was different about Thatcherism? The originality of this research, alongside the new primary sources, is in uniting these two theories. The existence and activities of the DSPU, the Leicester Unit and the SPL are in themselves a bridge linking Miliband to Hall and Scraton. On the one hand, the research reveals clear evidence of a politically-aligned state intent on attacking political opponents of the governing Conservative Party. However, those existing biases were not enough for Margaret Thatcher. The recruitment of private-sector loyalists into the DSPU, the enlistment of ideologically-aligned civil-servants into Whitehall, and direct pressure from the Prime Minister aimed at the police, MI5 and Home Office employees were all new developments. That deliberate 'super-charging' of the existing state biases described by Miliband was the physical manifestation of authoritarian populism.

Britain remains susceptible to the possibility of a zealot-like Premier inspiring, and directly introducing, a culture of conformity within some elements of the state. Should another Thatcher

come along – a Prime Minister who commanded loyalty not to a programme of policies but instead to a personality - then no check is in place to prevent such a leader weaponising sections of the state apparatus against their political opponents. With that in mind, the findings of this research can be viewed as a critical warning from history by revealing the lengths to which the apparatus of the British state can be purposefully turned against political opponents of the sitting Prime Minister. The existing conservative framework on which Thatcher's culture of conformity was established has not diminished. At the time of writing, as a new, Thatcher-aligned Conservative Prime Minister comes to power, Britain's susceptibility to a 'zealot-like Premier' remains an unresolved issue. Further research into these issues might look into SPL activity during the John Major government, the Tony Blair Labour administrations or more recent developments. During the Blair tenure, the DSPU was doubled in size – as had happened under Thatcher. Finally, the return to the news of 'special advisors' such as Dominic Cummings might be taken to suggest that the issues discussed in this thesis remain unresolved.

1972: MINISTERIAL GROUP, SHC AND SHC SUB-GROUPS

- **MINISTERIAL GROUP ON SUBVERSION 1972**
- Chair: Ted Heath (Prime Minister)
- Reginald Maudling (Home Secretary)
- Maurice Macmillan (SOS Employment)
- Alec Douglas-Home (Foreign and Commonwealth Sec)
- Peter Carrington (SOS Defence)
- Robert Carr (Lord President of the Council)

- ***Ministerial Group set up by Heath November 1972***
- ***SHC Group set up to carry out counter-subversion and report to Ministerial Group. Chair Dean to report to Carr***
- ***Subgroups set up by SHC members.***

- **SUBVERSION HOME COMMITTEE (SHC) 1972**
- Chair: Patrick Dean (Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee)
- James Waddell (Home Office – handles day-to-day liason between HO and MI5)
- Norman Reddaway (FCO)
- K Barnes (Employment)
- John Lewis Jones (MI5)
- Donald Maitland (PM's Press Secretary)
- J. Moss (Secretary)
- Robert Armstrong (Prime Minister's Office)

- SUB-GROUPS of SHC
- **INDUSTRIAL GROUP** (Chaired by Waddell)
- **SUBVERSION IN PUBLIC LIFE** (centred on Civil Service, Chaired by Armstrong)

Appendix B: Procedural Flow of the Leicester Unit

Special Branches from 16 Strike-Bound Local Forces.

- Collated information from front line occurrences and sent that information directly to the CIU (Leicester Unit).
- Information required in relation to picketing and criminal behaviour.
- To '*provide intelligence leading to the obtaining of evidence to support the prosecution of persons committing criminal offences.*'

The CIU (Leicester Unit).

- Seven-man team – 6 Special Branch and 1 MI5 officer.
- Headed by Deputy CC Goslin and DS Martindale.
- Analyses data sent from front line forces. Looking for patterns or trends which can link picketing and criminal behaviour back to Scargill and other miners' leaders.
- To *'identify individuals engaged in organised criminal activities (which) transcend police boundaries.'*

ACPO Chief Charles McLaughlin AND Michael Partridge Deputy Undersecretary of the Home Office.

- Both Partridge and the new ACPO President, McLaughlan, oversee the work of the CIU.

1985: SHC & SPL

- **SUBVERSION HOME COMMITTEE (Oversees all government procedures in regard to counter-subversion – including the civil service, the NHS, local government and education).**
- (Permanent Secretaries)
- Chair: Robert Armstrong (Cabinet Sec & Head of Home Civil Service)
- Brian Cubbon (Home Office)
- Kenneth Stowe (Dept of Health and SS)
- Clive Whitmore (Min of Defence)
- TM Heiser (Dept of Environment)
- William Fraiser (Scottish Office)
- **Anthony Duff (MI5)**
- **Royd Barker (MI5)**
- Michael Quinlan (Dept of Employment)
- Angus Fraser (Customs and Excise)
- David Hancock (Education and Science)
- George Moseley (Cab Office)
- **Michael Partridge (HO, chair of SPL, continues with SH after replacement as chair of SPL)**
- Rex Davie (Secretariat)

- **INTERDEPARTMENTAL SUBVERSION IN PUBLIC LIFE GROUP (SPL)**
- **Reports to the SHC. Specifically tasked with assessing subversion and identifying targets within the Civil Service).**
- Chair: Michael Partridge (Dept Undersecretary of State Home Office)
- David Hilary (Home Office Police Department)
- Cecil Shipp (Deputy Director General, MI5)
- Stella Rimington (MI5)
- RA Harrington (Assistant Secretary Home Office Police Dept)
- Assistant Commissioner CV Hewitt (Met Special Branch)
- Douglas Smith (Dept of Employment)
- Walter Ulrich (Dept of Education and Science)
- CJS Brearley (Cab Office)
- William Reid (Scottish Office)
- Richard Hastie-Smith (MOD)
- Ken Ennals, (Environment)
- Norman Clarke (Health and Social Security)
- Rex Davie (Cab Office)
- JFH Barker (Cab Office)

1987: REPLACEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN SHC AND SPL

- **SHC**
- Chair **Robin Butler** (Replaces Robert Armstrong as Cabinet Secretary and SHC Chair).
- **Michael Partridge** remains member of SHC, despite replacement in SPL.
- **SPL**
- New Chair **John Chilcot**
- **Graham Angel** Police dept HO, replaces David Hilary.
- **Ivor Manley** rep D.Smith.
- **N Stuart** replaces Ulrich
- **Patrick Walker MI5** replaces Cecil Shipp.
- **Commisioner Crawshaw Special Branch** replaces Hewitt
- **J Mayne** rep N Clarke

Appendix D: Significant Replacements and staff changes to SHC and SPL in 1987.

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